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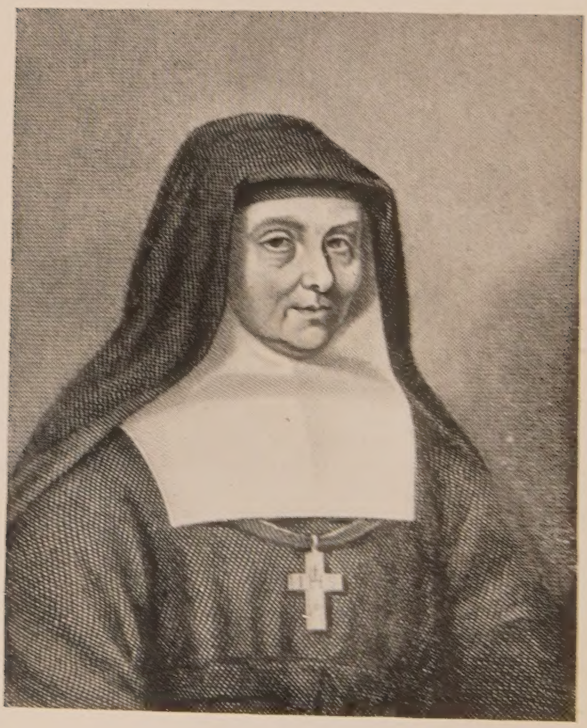

VENERABLE MOTHER DE CHANTAL

AT THE AGE OF SIXTY-FIVE.

After the original Portrait made in Paris in 1636 and preserved in the second convent of the Visitation of Paris.

ST. CHANTAL

AND THE

FOUNDATION OF THE VISITATION.

BY

MONSEIGNEUR BOUGAUD,

BISHOP OF LAVAL.

TRANSLATED FROM THE ELEVENTH FRENCH EDITION

BY

A VISITANDINE.

WITH A PREFACE BY

HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL GIBBONS.

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ST. CHANTAL

AND THE

FOUNDATION OF THE VISITATION.

CHAPTER I.

IN BECOMING A MOTHER ACCORDING TO GRACE, ST. CHANTAL DOES NOT CEASE TO BE A MOTHER ACCORDING TO NATURE.—HER CHILDREN AND GRANDCHILDREN.

An afflicting event, the death of the Baron de Thorens and of his young wife, Marie-Aimée de Chantal, who died of grief at the loss of her husband, suddenly interrupted the sweet task of formulating the Rules of the Visitation, and lacerated the heart of St. Francis de Sales. Mother de Chantal was crushed by the blow. She fell dangerously ill, and the Last Sacraments were administered to her. To those that may have been tempted to doubt her strong affection for her children, this fact reveals the intense love with which she continued to regard them even after her entrance into the cloister.

Let us turn for a moment from the rising Order, to look upon St. Chantal's children and grandchildren. Let us pass from her public to her private life. Let us seek the mother in the religious and the Foundress.

We shall first cast a retrospective glance at the state in which Madame de Chantal left her family when she became a religious. Of the six children with whom God had blessed her marriage only three were living, the eldest, Celse-Bénigne, and two daughters. Marie-Aimée, the elder of the two girls, had been married, at a very early age, to the young Baron de Thorens, brother of St. Francis de Sales. She lived at Thorens Castle, three leagues from Annecy, and went often to the convent to see her mother, with whom she always stayed whenever her young husband, who was colonel of a regiment of Savoy, was obliged to be absent in the service of his prince. As this happened frequently, the mother and daughter were often together. The second daughter never left her mother, and she may be considered the first pupil of the Visitation. St. Francis de Sales was her director and St. Chantal her teacher.[1] As the Sisters of the Visitation were not then cloistered, she often went out, sometimes to attend the sermons of St. Francis de Sales,[2] sometimes to visit among the noble families of the city, with whom she was a favorite guest, and very frequently to her sister's home at Thorens, where she always passed her vacations and the periods of her mother's absence from Annecy.

As to Celse-Bénigne, Madame de Chantal on leaving Dijon had confided him to the care of President Frémyot, who, in fact, had been for some time previously attending to his education. After her father's death, she placed him at the celebrated college of the Godrans, to finish his studies. Thence she sent him to court, where the reputation of his father, the Baron de Chantal, obtained for him a distinguished reception, and where his talents and his faults soon won for him a position at once brilliant and perilous.

Such was the situation of Madame de Chantal's three children. Fortune favored them. Marie-Aimée, richly dowered at her marriage, was the Baroness de Thorens. The beautiful estate of Bourbilly, Madame de Chantal's own dower, increased since the death of President Frémyot by the rich seigniory of Thotes, and since that of the old Baron, by the estate of Sauvigny, formed, with the title of Baron de Chantal, the splendid portion of Celse-Bénigne. Monthelon, with its vast dependencies, was reserved for Françoise, who already bore the title attached to the estate. As these three children were still minors, their mother, after having transferred to them all her property, even her own dower, reserved for herself its administration. Twice, in 1611 and 1612, she left her convent to go to Burgundy for the purpose of securing the estates inherited by her children; and, as we have seen, by her intelligent guardianship she doubled their income in a few years.

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[1] Letter dlxxiii. It bears no date, but may be found in the early editions.

[2] Letter of December 8, 1612.

All this proves how admirably Madame de Chantal had thus far fulfilled her duty as a mother. Later events will show that her maternal vigilance never relaxed.

In 1617, to which the course of our history has brought us, Marie-Aimée, who had been married since 1609, was living with the Baron de Thorens in the sweetest and holiest union. She was about to become a mother for the first time when, war being declared between France and Spain, her husband was ordered to lead his regiment into Piedmont.

Strange presentiments sometimes arise in the human heart. The young couple had never separated without many tears; but on this occasion their grief was extraordinary. They could neither moderate nor control it. Marie-Aimée, unable to say farewell, accompanied her husband a long distance on his journey. When at last obliged to part, "they wept so bitterly as to draw tears from the eyes of all present; and such was the violence of their sorrow that they themselves were astonished at being able to endure it." Both faithful Christians, their last words were a promise to serve God better and to labor with renewed ardor to acquire virtue, if He granted M. de Thorens a safe return from the army. Friends at last separated them, for neither had the strength to withdraw from the embrace of the other. M. de Thorens, mounting his horse, galloped off, the better to hide his tears; and Marie-Aimée, "that beautiful and desolate dove, retired as was her wont to her good mother. And from that day tears flowed from her eyes, without her being able to arrest their course."[1]

The Baron de Thorens had been gone only three weeks, and not a single shot had been fired, when news reached Annecy that he had been taken sick on his arrival in the camp, and that his life was in danger. "O my God! my dear

---

[1] *Vies des premières Mères de la Visitation :* Marie-Aimée de Chantal, p. 80. See also a short *Vie manuscrite de Marie-Aimée,* in the archives of Annecy.

Monsieur de Blonay," wrote St. Francis de Sales on hearing the sad news, "*dimitte me, ut plangam paululum dolorem meum.*[1] Alas! every moment I am expecting to hear of my brother de Thorens' death. He left here three weeks ago, and on Trinity Sunday he was in Turin, given over by the doctors and past hope of recovery. Indeed, it is already rumored at Chambéry that he is dead. Judge, then, whether I shall not stand in need of a fortnight to console his poor widow, and to calm my own deeply afflicted heart."

Next day a courier arrived with the fatal news. Although prepared for it, the saint was greatly affected. Striking his leg with the palm of his hand, he wept much, though without yielding entirely to his grief. Joining his hands, and raising both eyes and hands to heaven, he quietly uttered with sighs: "*Yes, yes, my God, since Thou hast willed it,*" adding these words, of which he had made use at the death of his mother: "*I was silent and opened not my mouth, because Thou hast done it.*" [2] His sorrow was increased by the thought of Marie-Aimée, so young, so tenderly attached to her husband, and who, scarcely nineteen, and about to become a mother for the first time, was to be crushed by a blow so terrible and so unexpected. He had merely mentioned the illness of the Baron de Thorens to Madame de Chantal, and the emotion with which she received it gave him to understand for what scenes he should prepare when the moment came to announce still more afflicting news to the young Baroness. "Oh think, my very dear daughter," he wrote to Mother Favre, commending himself to her earnest prayers, "think how deeply this affliction touches me, and see whether my sorrow is not immeasurably increased by that of his poor little wife, and of our Mother also, to whom I must go this morning, to take away the little hope that remained after the first news of his sickness." [3]

After strengthening his heart by long and fervent prayer, the saint repaired to the convent and asked for Mother de

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[1] "Suffer me, therefore, that I may lament my sorrow a little." (Job x. 20.)

[2] *La Vie du Bienheureux François de Sales*, by Charles-Auguste de Sales, Lyons, 1634, p. 497.

[3] Letter of May 29, 1617.

Chantal. At his very first word she trembled from head to foot, and fell into deep silence. She was so appalled at the thought of having to announce such news to her poor child that, in spite of all her efforts to overcome herself, she could not undertake to fulfil the duty. St. Francis de Sales was obliged to do it himself. Knowing that, according to her custom, Marie-Aimée would make her confession next morning, he decided to hide it from her till then.

Meanwhile, Marie-Aimée noticed that her mother had been called to the parlor, and, without knowing why, suddenly felt a pang that frightened her. The length of the visit increasing her fears, she awaited her mother's return, to read her countenance. But that strong woman observed such self-command that, although her heart was crushed, she allowed her daughter to perceive nothing. From time to time, however, whilst conversing with her, she threw in, as if by accident, some words on the love of God and entire abandonment to His will, thus to prepare her to receive the morrow's news with more courage and resignation.

Next morning Marie-Aimée went to confession, and when the saintly Bishop, in his sweetest words, had prepared her for the cross, he thus addressed her:

"Ah, well, my child, do we not belong wholly to God?"

"Oh yes, my Lord, entirely!" was the answer.

"And are we not ready," he continued, "to receive from His sacred hand all that it shall please Him to send?"

"Yes, my Lord and Father. But alas!" she said with a deep sigh, "you are going to tell me that my dear husband is dead!"

The saint replied only by tears, and she, sighing softly, exclaimed:

"O my God, my God! is it indeed true? Hast Thou taken my dear husband from me? Alas! alas! what wilt Thou that I do?"

Mother de Chantal was at the door, and when she heard her daughter's sobs and cries, she entered in order to console and assist her. But she had overrated her own strength. The sight of her child weeping and fainting overcame her, and she swooned away with a cry of grief.

O heart-rending scene! Mother and daughter unconscious under their weight of woe, the holy Bishop on his knees, tears streaming from his eyes, his bosom heaving with suppressed sobs!

When the first agony of grief had subsided, and Christian fortitude had resumed its ascendency, St. Francis de Sales went to the chapel and said Mass for the soul of his dear brother. Marie-Aimée heard it in the sacristy, where she could give free vent to her feelings. Her face bathed in tears, but her demeanor always angelic, from time to time she plaintively uttered in a low voice such words as: "Ah! my God, my true and only Good, what hast Thou done! .... Ah! how deep the wound! O my God, assist me! .... Let Thy hand, that has wounded me, heal me!" Her words pierced the hearts of all who heard her.

Sometimes, clasping her hands and raising her eyes to heaven, she would unconsciously exclaim: "My Saviour, Thou didst give me that dear husband. Why, then, hast Thou taken him from me, since his presence, far from separating me from Thee, served to unite me still more closely to Thee? .... But I am Thine, O my God, and I wish to belong to Thee more and more every day. Strike, cut, but give me, I pray Thee, the strength to bear the weight of Thy hand. O my God, I was not worthy to have such a husband! .... Ah! I stand in need of extraordinary assistance, for my grief is killing me."

When it was time for Holy Communion, her venerable mother, who was at her side, led her to the choir. Whilst kneeling at the Holy Table, Marie-Aimée made in secret a vow of perpetual chastity; and, after receiving the Blessed Sacrament, consecrated herself entirely and irrevocably to the love of Our Lord.

From that moment she became calmer, remaining motionless with clasped hands, occasionally raising her eyes to heaven. Her tears flowed continuously in silent streams, like swollen rivulets along their noiseless course.

At intervals some words escaped her lips: "O Jesus, my Love, Thy will be done in life and in death! O Jesus, I am all Thine! O passion and death of my Saviour, I love and revere you! . . . . My Jesus! I embrace Thee and choose Thee for my Spouse."

Her tears never ceased from that day. In vain did they entreat her to moderate her grief, to preserve herself for the child that she bore in her womb. Her affliction was too great to be comforted. She put on the deepest mourning, refused to wear the smallest ornament, commenced to dress and wait upon herself, multiplied her practices of piety,—in a word, gave herself entirely to God.

Three months passed thus in mingled grief and love, and then she was seized with the pangs of premature childbirth. It was impossible to remove her from the convent. After some hours of intense suffering she gave birth to a son, who lived but a moment. Mother de Chantal herself received the child, hastily baptized it, and saw it die in her arms. The poor young mother, forgetful of her pains, inquired for her babe. When told by Mother de Chantal that her son had joined the angels, she said: "Alas! has my poor child lived so short a time that it is already with the angels?" Then, raising her eyes to heaven, she said in a tone full of faith and submission to God's will:

"O my God, if this little child had lived, I too should have been obliged to live for it. But now I am all Thine, my God, all Thine!"

She made her will with perfect clearness of mind, and after arranging her temporal affairs, commenced with intelligence still greater to prepare herself to appear before God. She was scarcely nineteen, she was overwhelmed with excruciating pain, and almost agonizing; and yet her mind was clear and calm, her peace and serenity divine.

Toward eight in the evening, the physician judging her in great danger and that she had but three or four hours to live, Mother de Chantal sent for St. Francis de Sales. He came promptly, attended by several clergymen, who were all moved to tears at sight of Marie-Aimée's fervor.

She made her confession, and received Holy Viaticum with extraordinary piety. Then, clasping her hands, she said to her mother:

"May I venture to ask a favor of you?"

Knowing how tenderly she had loved her husband, Mother de Chantal thought that she wished to be buried at his side.

"My daughter," she answered, "speak. Do not hesitate. If it be possible, we will try to grant your request."

"Mother," replied Marie-Aimée, "I humbly ask to receive the holy habit of the Visitation," adding, as she turned her eyes toward the holy Bishop: "My Lord, I know I am unworthy of this favor."

Her words deeply affected all present, and St. Francis de Sales' eyes filled with tears. Mother de Chantal could no longer restrain her feelings. A cry of grief burst from her, as she stood at the pillow of her dying child.

Marie-Aimée was immediately clothed in the novices' habit; and as she was sinking very rapidly, the Bishop asked her whether she did not wish to receive Extreme Unction.

"Oh yes, my Lord, with all my heart," she answered. "I did not think of asking for it. Was it wrong in me?"

St. Francis de Sales reassured her, and administered the sacrament of the dying. She received it with perfect consciousness, following all the ceremonies and answering the prayers. When they were over, she said:

"My Lord, you have given me the habit, and I have made in my heart a thousand times the religious vows. May I not have the consolation of pronouncing them solemnly?"

The Bishop consented, and she continued:

"My God, what a grace to be at once a novice and a professed religious! My dear mother, how lavish is God of His mercy to your poor, unworthy child!"

She then pronounced the sacred vows, and St. Francis de Sales laid upon her head the black veil and gave her the silver cross. There was no need of the pall, usual on such occasions, to remind Marie-Aimée that she was to die to the world and to herself. The bed upon which she lay proclaimed all that.

Who could describe St. Chantal at this solemn moment? She was a mother, and if there is anything ineffable here below, it is a mother's grief. At times she was able to restrain herself, but again her feelings burst forth with such vehemence that the Bishop, fearing it might affect Marie-

Aimée, entreated her to be calm. Marie-Aimée heard him, and gazing tenderly upon her mother, as if to console her, she said:

"My dear mother! Oh, I love her more than I can say!" And again: "O mother, how I am suffering! Good God! how great are my pains! But what are they compared with the sufferings of Jesus upon the cross?"

Seeing her intense agony, and knowing the greatness of her beautiful soul, St. Francis de Sales proposed to her to make an extraordinary and heroic act of virtue.

"Would you not be glad, my dear child," he asked, "to endure these pains till the end of the world, if such were God's will?"

"Yes, my Lord," she eagerly replied, "not only these pains, but whatever else He may please to send me. Am I not all His, without reserve, without exception?"

Then, her eyes closed, her lips half open, she lapsed into silence. It would have been hard to decide whether she was sleeping or praying. An indescribable brightness, like that of the morning rising, began to spread over her brow. Her countenance was being gradually transfigured. As she lay thus, no one would have thought her so near death. She was more like an expanding flower than one about to fade.

Two hours after midnight she opened her eyes, and with a strong voice said:

"Ah, death is here! I must go. It has seized my heart, but my Jesus seized it first, and He alone shall possess it."

Then thrice pronouncing the holy name of Jesus, and raising her eyes to heaven, she expired just as her lips closed for the third time. It was September 7, 1617. Marie-Aimée de Chantal was nineteen years, two months, and six days old.

The saintly Bishop, who had long been her director, assisted her to the last, and closed one of her eyes, her good mother having the courage to close the other.[1]

This painful duty over, Mother de Chantal, unable to support her grief, exhausted by intense agony, fell swooning. Restored to consciousness, but still annihilated, as it were, by the stroke that had fallen upon her, St. Francis de Sales left the convent, ordered his carriage, and drove out of town. "His attendants," says the Bishop of Belley, "thought he was going to Sales Castle, three leagues from Annecy, to seek consolation and take the air. When they discovered, however, that he was on his way to visit me, they represented to him the deep affliction of the bereaved mother, and reminded him how much she stood in need of consolation. 'You wrong my affection,' was his reply, 'if you think her more afflicted than I. I know her fortitude and my own weakness. How could I offer consolation, I who have more need of it than she? Do not blame me, then, for going to seek it where I hope to find it.' And he came to see me, and shed so many tears whilst relating this holy death preceded by so pious a life, that I thought I should be dissolved into tears with him. He valued highly, and according to God, the remarkable virtue of the mother; but he esteemed so much the supernatural perfection that God had shed upon the soul of the daughter, that he spoke of her as of an angel rather than a child of Adam."[1]

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[1] *Esprit de Saint François de Sales*, vol. i. p. 132.

On his return from Belley, he went at once to the convent, and found Mother de Chantal oppressed with grief. To increase her sorrow, a distressing doubt had taken possession of her. She had baptized her little grandson hastily. Had she done it rightly? Had she used water? Had she exactly pronounced the sacramental words? In vain did she search her memory. It was impossible to recall precisely what had passed. The thought that her haste and want of care had, perhaps, caused this little soul to be forever deprived of the sight of God, and that it would eternally lament her negligence, drew streams of tears from her eyes. As soon as she saw St. Francis de Sales, she cast herself at his feet weeping and confessing her fault. "O Father, Father, that I should be the cause of a soul's never seeing God,—that I should be the cause!"

The penetrating eye of the Bishop saw at once the origin and character of her temptation.

"What, Mother!" he said, "are you thinking only of yourself?"

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[1] *Esprit de Saint François de Sales,* vol. i. p. 132.

These words shed light upon her mind. She perceived that she had been less grieved at the supposed misfortune than at the part she herself had taken in it, and that she was mingling self-love with the love of God. She humbled herself, and her anxiety vanishing, she clearly remembered that she had carefully and fervently fulfilled the holy prescriptions of the Church.

This was the day for Marie-Aimée's burial, for she was still lying upon her bed of death as beautiful as in life, and surrounded by crowds of people coming to touch her remains with chaplets and pictures. They even went to the Bishop for permission to invoke her. She looked like an angel. She was buried in the religious habit, the silver cross upon her breast, and a wreath of white roses on her head.[1]

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[1] After the funeral, St. Francis de Sales wrote the following lines in the mortuary register of the convent:

"Marie-Aimée de Rabutin, daughter of our Mother, and widow of Bernard de Sales, Baron of the said place and of Thorens, after having frequently expressed the desire to be received into the Congregation here established, was taken suddenly ill in this house. After she had made her confession and received sacramental absolution, with unparalleled resignation, rare meekness, and deep humility, her mind being extremely tranquil, in a distinct voice, sweet and clear, she asked for the habit of the Visitation, which was granted her on account of the great devotion she had manifested, and, having received the Sacrament of Extreme Unction, she begged to be allowed to make the vows. This request also being granted, she made them with unequalled courage, and expired three hours after, having until her last breath constantly repeated very gently and devoutly the words, *Live Jesus!* She was admitted to the habit and profession by her Bishop, the brother of her late husband, and by her mother, the Superioress of the Congregation, and by all the Sisters, who were present at her pious and lovely death, September 6, 1617. On that day, at eight o'clock in the evening, she fell into her mortal illness. At nine she received the habit; at ten she was professed; and between one and two in the morning, on the seventh day of the said month, the eve of the Nativity of Our Lady, she passed to a better life, leaving behind her a rare example of devotion and incomparable spiritual consolation to those who, otherwise afflicted at her departure, saw and admired the pious circumstances attending it.

"FRANÇOIS, *Bishop of Geneva*,

who administered to her the sacraments of Penance, Holy Eucharist, On his return home, St. Francis de Sales wrote at once to Mother Favre the following account of this holy death:

"You may imagine what our grief has been during the few past days, my dear daughter. It was not the Madame de Thorens whom you knew, although she was very amiable; it was a Madame de Thorens entirely consecrated to God, beautified by the resolution to live for God alone, full of light on spiritual things, of knowledge of God and self. She was, in fine, such as might lead us to hope that, after a time, she would be a second *our Mother.*

"I shall tell you nothing of her most holy end. Of those that saw her, some came to me the following day to ask permission to invoke her, and others to renew their resolutions, so touched were they by this death so full of pain, of pain all studded with *Live Jesus! . . . . Lord Jesus, draw me to Thee! . . . . O passion and death of my Saviour, I embrace you! . . .* all pronounced so sweetly as to make one marvel!"[1]

And again he wrote: "Ah, what a death was hers! It was certainly the holiest, the sweetest, the most lovely that can be imagined. I cherished her with a love infinitely more than fraternal; but, as it has pleased the Lord, so may it be done! May His holy name be forever blessed! Amen."[2]

Whilst St. Francis de Sales thus relieved his heart by pouring out his grief, Mother de Chantal sunk under hers. Since her daughter's death, she had fallen into mute sorrow, a state in which we shall always see her under similar circumstances, and which roused fears for her life. She appeared at the recreations of the Sisters, but without a word, silently turning her distaff, entirely absorbed, and unconscious of what was said. She wrote no more than she talked. The only note that she addressed to St. Francis de Sales, and which we shall give here on account of its incomparable beauty, was afterward a subject of self-reproach to her. She looked upon it as betraying a want of resignation:

"The peace of Our Lord with His eternal blessing be ever

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and Extreme Unction, and received the vows of this amiable deceased Sister, whose age was nineteen years, two months, and six days.

"SISTER JEANNE-FRANÇOISE FRÉMYOT."

[1] Letter of September 14, 1617. [2] Letter of October, 1617.

in the midst of your heart, my truly very dear Father! I feel somewhat relieved of my sorrow, and my mind is filled with calm and sweetness in submission to the divine will, which more earnestly now than ever I desire to see reign absolutely in our holy union.

"But, my God, notwithstanding this, I see and feel how truly this daughter was and will always be the beloved child of my heart, and justly, it seems to me. It is an inexpressible relief in my sorrow to feel this love where you have placed it, as a drop of precious water in an ocean.

"It is also a relief for me to tell you this, my unique and very kind Father. God be praised! and I say it with all my soul, peacefully and calmly, and with very great gratitude for the favor His goodness has conferred upon us,—yes, God be praised for having given us such a child, and for having called her to Himself so happily.

"It seems to me that I ought to retrench the satisfaction of speaking so much of our poor little departed one; for the pleasure I take in it always leaves a feeling of tenderness, my Father, my unique Father, and all that you know you are to me. It will be to me a little relief to have told you this." [1]

Thus did this energetic woman express her grief. Instead of the cries of the wounded eagle, which might have been expected to escape from her lips, she gives utterance only to the sweet and humble lamentations of the dove, even reproaching herself for them. But nature can never be restrained with impunity. After six weeks of interior struggles and heroic efforts to repress her sorrow, and hide it, at least, from others, she fell sick, and soon became dangerously ill. The cause of her sickness was maternal grief, as is attested by all her contemporaries, not only by the religious of the Visitation and by St. Francis de Sales, but even by Bussy de Rabutin. "Some weeks after the death of Madame de Thorens," he says, "Mother de Chantal, having made too great efforts to hide her grief, fell sick unto death." [2] She was, in fact, so low that the Last Sacraments were administered. After having heard her confession, given her the Holy Viaticum, and anointed her, St. Francis de Sales knelt down at the foot of her bed to await her last breath. All the Sisters were present. Mother de Chantal appeared to be suffering excruciating agony, more even in soul than in body. Her eyes, fixed upon a picture of Our Lord, which the holy Bishop had directed to be placed at the foot of her bed, revealed her interior struggles and her ardent faith. Suddenly St. Francis de Sales felt inspired to make a vow to St. Charles Borromeus, who had just been canonized. Some relics of the saintly Archbishop were brought, and, with great difficulty, several particles of them were inserted between the lips of the agonizing Mother. On the instant, heaving a deep sigh, which all thought her last, she exclaimed:

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[1] Letter not dated, but written in September, 1617.

[2] *Vie abrégée de Madame de Chantal.*

"Father, I shall not die."

"No, my daughter," was the reply, "you will, through the divine mercy, live eternally."

"I feel that I am cured," she continued. "I am quite well, thanks to God and His saint!"

She was, indeed, cured. In a few days she regained her strength, without experiencing the weakness that usually accompanies convalescence. "For," say the old *Mémoires*, "He who had cured her does not perform imperfect cures."

Such was Mother de Chantal under the affliction caused by the death of her eldest daughter. Not for an instant did she leave her child; she stood by her side till the last. She had the courage to close her eyes, though she swooned from grief after fulfilling the painful duty. She tried to bury in her own bosom the sorrow that oppressed her; but the effort cast her on a bed of sickness, and she literally died of grief, since a miracle alone restored her to life. Before such affliction, borne so magnanimously, we pause in mute veneration, and the words of St. Francis de Sales recur to us as a perfect summary of the scenes through which we have passed: "Nothing was wanting to this grief; it was extreme. Nothing was wanting to this resignation; it was sublime."[1]

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[1] *Vie abrégée de Madame de Chantal.*

Let us turn for a moment from this sad picture to glance at Mother de Chantal's relations with her other children. Let us watch the beautiful girlhood of Françoise and the more impetuous youth of Celse-Bénigne developing under the eye and hand of this vigilant mother.

Françoise, as we have said, never left her mother. When reading the *Letters* of St. Francis de Sales, we constantly see by a word, by a salutation at the end, the smiling face of the young girl by the side of her saintly mother. "Remember me cordially to our Sisters and to Mademoiselle de Chantal also, for is she not my dear child?"[1] And again: "Send our dear Françoise to me. I will hear her confession this evening."[2] And elsewhere: "I saw our beloved child Françoise at the sermon, but I did not venture to ask her how my very dear Mother was; for there were too many around who might have heard me. I commission this little note to ask how you are, and our dear little girl to repeat to you some of the sermon, which I delivered boldly and earnestly."[3]

Contemporary writers present us with the same picture. Everywhere and always Françoise is at her mother's side. Now she is playing with the novices, some of whom are almost as young as herself, and amusing them with her birds and squirrels.[4] She is walking under the trees in the garden, sometimes with Sister Marie-Aimée de Blonay, sometimes with Sister Claude Agnès de la Roche, but more frequently with Sister Paul-Hiéronyme de Monthouz, who appears to have had the especial care of her education.[5] She even goes to prayer with the community, and wishes to take part in all that the Sisters do, not excepting their corporal mortifications.[6] In the refectory her place is beside her mother, and in the dormitory their cells adjoin. Alas! before the death of the young Baroness de Thorens, next those two cells there was a third for Marie-Aimée, that during her visits to the convent the two dear children might sleep, so to say, under the wing of their mother. "Every morning, when the bell rang for prayers," says Mother de Chaugy, "this amiable child (Marie-Aimée) would stand at the threshold of her cell, to bid her dear mother good-morning. But as it was the time for silence, the latter, without saying a word, would return the greeting by an affectionate glance and a nod."[1]

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[1] Letter of February 5, 1617.

[2] Letter without date, but which must have been written in 1613. It is No. dlxxiii. in the first edition of *Letters.*

[3] Letter of December 4, 1612.

[4] *Mémoires* of Mother Marie-Adrienne Fichet.

[5] *La petite Maison de la Galerie. Vies de quelques Supérieurs. La Sœur Paul-Hiéronyme de Monthouz.*

[6] *La petite Maison de la Galerie*, p. 7.

Françoise did the same. "Every morning," we read in an old manuscript, "she used to rise early and go skipping into the antechamber of the choir, to meet her mother coming down to prayer. The saint would graciously caress her a little, and give her a blessing in silence, after which the child would run off satisfied."[2]

Not only did Françoise never leave her mother, but when the latter was obliged to absent herself, she took the child with her. On the two journeys into Burgundy, in 1611 and 1613, Françoise was in the litter with her mother. It was the same in 1618, when the saint went to found the convent of Grenoble. Some months later, just as they were about to start for Bourges, Françoise was taken sick; but in spite of it, for the sickness was not of a serious nature, the saint decided to take her. Françoise was already in the carriage, when St. Francis de Sales opposed her departure. "Our good M. Michel," wrote Mother de Chantal to Mother Marie-Péronne, "will tell you all our news, and what a disappointment it is to my Françoise and to me that she could not accompany me. She is not in danger, thank God! But you know she is slow in recovering from sickness. That is the reason we could not wait for her. But, God willing, M. de Vars will take her to Lyons as soon as she is well enough, and from there she will be sent to Moulins, whither we shall despatch some one to bring her here."[1] Although obliged to leave her daughter for awhile, Mother de Chantal did not lose sight of her. At every relay there was a word for or about her. On arriving at Bourges, November 26th, and finding no news of her, the saint became uneasy. "My very dear Sister," she wrote to Mother Favre, "I hear so seldom from you and all at Annecy, that I fear something has happened to my daughter Françoise."[2] And, some days later, knowing that her child had reached Lyons, she wrote again to Mother Favre: "I do not know whether they have gone for Françoise yet. I am anxious about it, for she must be in your way. Adieu! Love to my dear daughters and to my Françoise, if she is still with you. In case she is, let her write to me."[3] To hurry her daughter's arrival, she wrote at the same time to Mother de Bréchard, then at Moulins: "I accept your offer to send to Lyons for Françoise. . . . My nephew de Neufchèzes will go to Moulins for her, if she goes to your house. See the trouble that might have been avoided, had they not prevented me from doing as I wanted; for the poor child was getting into the carriage to come here, when she received the prohibition to do so. Can you imagine her feelings?"[4] And she concludes: "Adieu! Get prayers for my children"—which words terminate all her letters.[5]

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[1] *Mémoires* of Mother de Chaugy, p. 435.

[2] *Abrégé de la Vie et des Vertus de Marie-Françoise de Rabutin de Chantal*, published by the Abbé Migne under the title of *Œuvres complètes de Saint François de Sales et de Sainte Chantal*, vol. vii. p. 453.

Thus watched over by Mother de Chantal, directed by St. Francis de Sales, loved by all the first Mothers of the Order, and petted by the novices, Françoise attained her seventeenth year. It was now time to think seriously of her future.

As we have already mentioned, Mother de Chantal would have been pleased had her daughter become a religious; and Françoise was so fervent in 1611, 1612, 1613, that, for a time, there was hope of her desire being realized. But with her advancement in age her inclination for the cloister disappeared; and her director, St. Francis de Sales, told Mother de Chantal that, since her daughter had no vocation to become a religious, and she was now in her seventeenth year, it was time for her to see something of the world. As the convent of Annecy was not yet cloistered, and as at that period social gatherings did not take place at night, it was very easy to introduce Françoise into society, though still residing at the convent. We shall now see how dangerous is the world. This young girl, who had been reared in so Christian a manner, whose fervor was such that, at the age of fifteen, when suffering from intermittent fever, she would take advantage of the day on which she had no fever to discipline herself with nettles; who, on entering into society, was directed by St. Francis de Sales, and who ceased not to dwell with St. Chantal, had scarcely appeared in the gay world before she felt her love for God grow cold. "She was too well received by the world," say the *Mémoires*, "for her not to reciprocate its welcome. In fact, as her beauty and intelligence distinguished her among the most accomplished young ladies, so did her sprightliness and gaiety, her refined and exquisite taste for pleasure, lead her with zest into its enjoyments, ever holding to the strictest rules of modesty and reserve, though not to those of piety, however, for in these she became very lax. Our holy Founder sometimes spoke to her on the subject with paternal solicitude; but he knew well that this was not the moment to require from the dear child those ripe fruits of perfect virtue that she would afterward produce. Treating her according to her present weakness, he begged her to recite every day at least one *Hail Mary* with all her heart. His recommendation was so dear to her, that she never once failed in it the rest of her life. She has told us a thousand similar instances of the saint's gentleness, such as offering her some pins to close her kerchief, when her neck was too much uncovered. Another time, noticing her finery, he said to her: 'Françon, I am very sure it was not our Mother who dressed you in that way.' This was true; for on leaving the convent she used to go to some friend's house to add to her ornaments what the world exacted, but what the austerity of a mother dead to the world would not permit."[1]

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[1] *Lettres de Sainte Chantal*, edit. Migne, p. 977.

[2] *Ibid.* p. 978.

[3] *Ibid.* p. 981.

[4] *Ibid.* p. 984.

[5] *Ibid.* p. 1071.

Such inclinations in Françoise naturally led her guardians to think of selecting for her a suitable husband. Mother de Chantal, and even the Bishop of Geneva, commenced to take active steps in the matter. A first attempt was made in 1618. The gentleman in question, M. de Foras, was a nobleman of Savoy, rich and pious, attached to the suite of the Duke de Nemours. St. Francis thought very highly of him, and, in 1619, when in Paris, he introduced him to Celse-Bénigne de Chantal. A close intimacy soon sprang up between the two young men, who were of the same disposition and equally noble by birth. "M. de Foras has been to see me this morning," writes St. Francis de Sales to Mother de Chantal, "and yesterday he saw M. de Chantal, by whom, he tells me, he was received with renewed expressions of affection and treated as a brother. I have no motive in saying (and I say it to my dear Mother) that, if I had a sister worthy of M. de Foras, and if I had fifty thousand crowns to give her, I would do it with all my heart. The more I see of him, the more I love him." [1]

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[1] Unpublished *Mémoire*, quarto, belonging to the convent of Annecy, containing the Life of Madame de Toulongeon and of Madame de Grignan, p. 209.

Although the Bishop had no *motive* in saying what he did, Mother de Chantal was not slow to comprehend his meaning, and a marriage between M. de Foras and Françoise was begun to be talked of. As our saint was then at Bourges founding a convent, and Françoise in Burgundy with one of her relatives,[2] there ensued in the matter delays and difficulties. "Good M. de Foras," wrote St. Francis de Sales, January 3, 1619, "is somewhat indisposed and very anxious about his suit."

On the 9th of the same month he again wrote: "What troubles M. de Foras is, that he knows not where to go for the conclusion of his marriage or of his suit, since Mademoiselle de Chantal is not with you; for she without you, or you without her, can do nothing. Secondly, I do not yet know whether it will be agreeable to M. de Chantal; but that he can ascertain.[1] Thirdly, he does not know what dowry will be given her, nor whether it will be paid in cash or in notes upon M. de Chantal. I explain these things after my own fashion, not knowing in what terms and with what ceremonies to proceed in a matter in which I have no experience, thank God! I assure you, the poor fellow is not more expert in the business than I, though he is well versed in all kinds of virtue, piety, and goodness. He hopes that even should he not marry Mademoiselle de Chantal, which, however, he greatly desires, he will not cease to be your son." [2]

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[1] This letter, which was published in a number of the *Ami de la Religion*, October, 1859, is not addressed to Mother Favre, as the Abbé Keller supposes. It is certainly addressed to Mother de Chantal. The Archbishop in question is not the Archbishop of Lyons, but the Archbishop of Bourges. St. Chantal was, at that time, in the latter city, preparing to start for Paris, where St. Francis de Sales had just arrived, and where he was negotiating the very difficult affair of the foundation of a convent. The letter was written between November 4, 1618, and April 6, 1619.

[2] Bussy-Rabutin merely mentions this visit, without naming the relative or what part of Burgundy.

This first project did not succeed, we know not why, since there was no opposition on the part of relatives.[3] One year later, we find St. Francis de Sales again engaged, and quite as unsuccessfully, in a similar negotiation. On February 20, 1620, he wrote to St. Chantal: "If I could hear from you that my dear child, Mademoiselle de Chantal, is neither married nor on the way to marriage, I should try to open negotiations with M. d'Andelot's nephew, if he return soon enough from Italy, where he is at present with his uncle, or with M. de Ballon, if he does not marry Mademoiselle de Charmoisy, whom he is addressing among a great many rivals." [4]

Whilst St. Francis de Sales in Savoy was thus interesting himself in the future welfare of Françoise, Mother de Chantal was engaged in similar and more successful efforts in Paris, whither she had been called on business of which we shall speak later. Among those that aspired to her daughter's hand, she was particularly drawn to the Count de Toulongeon, a nobleman of high family, who had distinguished himself at the siege of Suze and of Rochelle. "He was a man of great merit," says Bussy-Rabutin, "who would have advanced far on the road to fortune had he lived a little longer."[1] Though still young, he was, however, much older than Françoise; but this disparity of age was counterbalanced by so many advantages that neither St. Chantal nor Celse-Bénigne, who also was in Paris, hesitated for a moment.[2] The former immediately wrote to her daughter, confiding her letter to Count de Toulongeon himself, who proceeded with it to Burgundy, where Françoise was at that time staying. This letter will be read with pleasure. It is full of authority and good sense, as a mother could still write in the seventeenth century.

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[1] Celse-Bénigne de Chantal, being the eldest of the family and the representative of his deceased father, was always consulted when there was question of his sister's marriage.

[2] Unpublished letter of St. Francis de Sales (Archives of the Visitation).

[3] Letter of St. Chantal, February 27, 1619.

[4] Unpublished letter (Archives of Annecy).

"Here, my dear daughter, is Count de Toulongeon, who, having eight or ten days free, comes post-haste to learn from your own lips, he says, whether you do not find him too dark; but as to his disposition, he hopes it will not displease you. For my part, and speaking sincerely, I not only have nothing to say against this match, but I find every reason to desire it. Our Lord gives me so much satisfaction in this matter, that I do not remember ever in my life to have had a similar feeling towards the things of earth. His birth and personal attractions are not what I esteem most in him, but his intelligence, his disposition, his sincerity, his prudence, probity, and reputation. In fine, my dear Françon, let us bless God for having sent him to us. But, my child, in gratitude for the favor, try to love and serve God better than you have ever done, and let nothing whatever prevent you from continuing to receive the sacraments frequently and from practising humility and meekness. Take for your guide the book of *Philothea*.[3] It will guide you well. Do not waste time over such trifles as jewelry and dress. Your marriage will place you in affluence; but, my dear daughter, always remember that we should use the riches God has given us without loving them, and it is in this light that we ought to view all that the world esteems. Henceforth let it be your ambition to be adorned with virtue. Be modest and prudent in the social position you are about to fill. Indeed, I am very glad that this marriage has been the result of your relatives' and my own endeavors, without your having anything to do with it. It is thus the wise allow themselves to be governed, and I wish, my dear daughter, always to be one of your counsellors. And your brother, too, who possesses good judgment, is charmed with the match. True, Count de Toulongeon is some fifteen years older than you; but, my child, you will be much happier with him than with a young fool, rattle-brained and dissolute, as are the young men of to-day. You will marry a man who is free from all that, who is not a gambler, who has passed his life honorably at court and on the field, and who receives large emoluments from the King. You have not the good sense that I have always given you credit for if you do not receive him kindly and frankly. Do it with a good grace, my daughter, I beg of you, and be assured that God has thought of you."[1]

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[1] *Généalogie manuscrite.*

[2] Letter of St. Chantal, March 12, 1620.

[3] "*The Devout Life*," by St. Francis de Sales.

Françoise did as her mother desired. She accepted Count de Toulongeon from her hands. Relatives in both families were pleased, all noble and rich, and soon there was question of nothing but the wedding-feasts, ornaments, jewels, magnificent dresses, and the thousand frivolous nothings that precede marriage, and that often lead to forgetfulness of the gravity of the sacrament. In the midst of this worldly excitement, let us again listen to the voice of the saint. Rarely has she spoken so admirably.

"May 13, 1620.

"My dearest Daughter:

"I bless God for having directed you so well and so happily thus far with regard to your marriage. I hope His divine goodness will grant you in it perfect peace. I assure you, dearest, the farther the matter proceeds, the better I am satisfied with it. In my opinion, there could not be a more amiable man than M. de Toulongeon. He has returned perfectly satisfied, and we all have great reason to be so too. Oh, truly, my dear Françon, I am greatly indebted to you for showing me such confidence; but, good God! how I have prayed and longed to see you happily married! . . . Write me sincerely, as you promised, all the sentiments of your heart, and tell me whether God has united your heart with that of M. de Toulongeon. This I desire above all things, and I trust that God gave His benediction to your first interview. As for myself, dearest, I tell you candidly, he is just to my taste, and, as I have already written to you, I love him more sincerely than words can say. Besides, all our relatives and friends that know him could not be better pleased with him.

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[1] Letter xciii.

"As to our rings, M. de Toulongeon is very anxious about them. He wants to have almost all the jewels in Paris sent here, that we may buy as many as we want for you. But I do not wish you to buy any, for I tell you frankly, my dearest daughter, ladies of quality no longer wear them at this court. They are worn only by city ladies. But I know not how I shall prevail upon Count de Toulongeon to yield, for he begs me to allow it this time at least. He sends you some pearls, ear-rings, and an enamelled locket covered with diamonds, which is all that ladies now wear on their dress. Lord God, my dearest daughter, I see plainly that you are lady and mistress of the heart and purse of our dear and amiable M. de Toulongeon. It will, consequently, depend upon yourself to manage all things discreetly and wisely. He wishes you to send your measure. Do so, not that I shall permit him to send you more than one robe; for that with all the rest would not be reasonable. You may, if M. de Toulongeon wishes to assist you, have another one made; but I would prefer his sending us the money. We would have it made in the fashion and of materials now worn, and that may be worn everywhere. Moreover, you must not make any wedding-clothes. The ladies here and at court laugh at the very idea of such a thing. I also desire your marriage to take place quietly, and in this I wish to be heeded.

"M. de Toulongeon has told me that you do not want to be married in May. My God! have no scruple about that. It is superstition. I, too, however, think that it cannot be, although I am very anxious for it.

"In fine, the oftener I see this nobleman, the more I love him and am conscious of the great reason both you and I have to bless God for this fortunate meeting. Answer him very politely and kindly. Act frankly and honorably toward him, showing him reciprocal affection, as the time for ceremony is past. My dearest Françon, I want you to love your betrothed devotedly, and to be as happy as you have reason to be. As for myself, I am perfectly satisfied, and justly so. Adieu, my dearly loved daughter! Write to me without reserve."

And as if she had not sufficiently recommended simplicity to her daughter, the saint adds in a postscript:

"P. S. We must not allow M. de Toulongeon to follow his inclination to buy so many things, for his desire to please you in everything is greater than words can say. If ever a woman was happy, it is indeed you. But you, darling, you must be prudent and restrain him on this point. It will be much better to be a little economical, and spend your money usefully, than to waste it on trinkets and trifles. For my part, I do not want my Françon to run such a course. My reputation would suffer from it, too; for being my daughter, you are more bound to be discreet and modest. A thousand greetings to our dear relatives. Once more adieu, my dear Françon! Let us devotedly love him whom God has given us."[1]

Everything was ready for the wedding, when, alas for human plans! Françoise fell ill, and lay at death's door. St. Chantal notified Mother de Bréchard of the fact in the following terms: "My daughter was very near dying. See how things happen in this world! She is now very well, and, please God, in eight days she will be married."[2]

Françoise was, indeed, married a short time after, probably toward the end of June, 1620. Neither the exact date of the ceremony, nor the place in which it was performed, can be ascertained. The nuptial blessing was certainly pronounced by St. Francis de Sales, and it brought happiness to Françoise, who, as we shall see, tasted in this union almost as much joy as can possibly be found on earth.

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[1] This letter may be found published for the first time in the new edition of the *Œuvres de Saint François de Sales,* Migne, vol. viii. p. 1103. The date, however, is incorrect. It should be 1620.

[2] Letter, June 9, 1620, Migne, p. 1040.

While Mother de Chantal was so successfully concluding this important affair, she was occupied with another as serious and more difficult, but which was crowned with equal success, namely, the marriage of her son, the young Baron de Chantal. As we have already said, Celse-Bénigne was, on account of his good qualities and defects, the joy and the torment of his mother.

"As to your Celse-Bénigne," wrote St. Francis de Sales to our saint on returning a letter in which mention was made of her son, "fail not to enjoy to your heart's content all the pretty things that are said of him, for he is your child. God will bestow upon him many great and perfect gifts, if He hears my prayers. . . . I return the dear letter, for I must not deprive you any longer of lines that speak so favorably of Celse-Bénigne."[1] And the day after the receipt of such a letter, they would hear of some rash act, some duel, in which, as usual, he had figured with spirit, courage, and success. He enjoyed very great favor at court, where he had been for several years. Full of wit and gaiety, daring and original, he danced beautifully, rode well, "and," says Bussy-Rabutin, "was so expert at fencing that, if his bravery could be questioned after the proofs he had given of it in the army, the private combats in which he engaged would have placed it beyond doubt."[2] A friend of the Duke de Boutteville, of the Duke d'Elbœuf, of M. de Noailles, of the Prince de Chalais, of the Marquis de Toiras, afterward Marshal of France, his life, dissipated and brilliant, was passed in festivities, duels, and adventures, which kept his mother in a state of mental torture.

Just before Mother de Chantal arrived in Paris, Celse-Bénigne had been engaged in a duel which gave rise to much comment, and, in spite of his many influential friends, he was threatened with the law. Mother de Chantal was greatly afflicted by the affair, as all her letters of this period bear witness. "This is only a line," she writes to Mother de Châtel, "to greet you most lovingly, and to beg and conjure you most earnestly to entreat our Sisters to pray fervently and perseveringly for my son. Let the most united with God take him in hand, and you do so particularly. He is good-hearted, he has excellent dispositions, but his youth leads him astray. I believe Our Lord is preparing him for some heavy cross. May His goodness give him the grace to receive it as he should!"[1] And to Mother de Bréchard she writes: "Pray for me. I am in a time of great mortification on account of my children."[2] A little later, again to Mother de Châtel: "I have had many crosses, my child, and very sensible ones, too; and I have found that I have still a true mother's heart. O God! my dear child, let us belong to Him without reserve."[3]

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[1] This letter is taken from the process of canonization of St. Chantal (fol. 130).

[2] *Généalogie manuscrite.*

It was to withdraw Celse-Bénigne from these dangers, which so disturbed her peace both as a mother and as a saint, that she commenced, in 1618, to take active steps to obtain a good wife for him, although he was then only twenty-one. Two attempts having failed, and no further prospect then presenting itself, the saint exerted her maternal authority to remove him from Paris and the court, where he was losing his soul. She sent him into Savoy to St. Francis de Sales, with the request to obtain for him, if possible, a position at the court of the Duke of Nemours. "I will do my best," wrote St. Francis de Sales, "but I fear they will not at once give him a high position. He must gain that by obedience and good behavior, by which means he will in time attain one suited to his birth. I shall take the first opportunity to speak to him about it. I shall try to convince him that gentleness and politeness are incomparably more honorable than violence and haughtiness, and that they will be for him the road to glory. You know, my dearest Mother, that the Prince's house is like a monastery, and that he will suffer no disorders in it. Although in coming here he wishes to conform to the liberty of the country, yet he desires his household to be virtuous. I shall do all that I can for the son of my dearest Mother, the brother of my dearest sister, and the nephew of such an uncle, who writes to me about him."[4]

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[1] *Lettres de Sainte Chantal,* edit. Migne, p. 970.

[2] *Ibid.* p. 984.

[3] *Ibid.* p. 985.

[4] Unpublished letter (Archives of Annecy).

This plan did not succeed. Either because the young Baron de Chantal, accustomed to the gaiety of the French court, could not resolve to remain in Savoy, or from some other cause, he returned to Paris, where his mother still was. He had scarcely arrived when we find him compromised, not in a duel, but in one of those unexpected assaults so frequent in the seventeenth century. The part he took in it was for the defence of one of his maltreated friends. "I know, my dearest Sister," wrote Mother de Chantal on March 12, 1620, to Mother de Bréchard, "I know that you have deeply felt the unfortunate occurrence that has befallen my son, for your heart is so full of affection for me that it feels all that I feel. I did not mention it when I wrote to you, because I did not think of it, and because God granted me the grace to be very little affected by the affair, which was communicated to me quite bluntly. In fact, it was an unexpected encounter, and one in which a wiser head than his would not have been able to refuse assistance to an injured friend. But all this is worldly reasoning. It has been a source of regret to him, although no trouble has resulted from it, and all is now settled. The good gentleman, whom the constables wanted to take off with them, was severely wounded, and is not yet well. But, thank God, everything else is right. Your prayers will not be useless to my son. He has need of them."[1]

Some time after, at the end of a letter to Mother de Châtel, she added: "I beg you, my dearest child, obtain for me from our Sisters the charity of fervent and persevering prayers for my son. Let the most united with God undertake this. I implore them to do so, and you in particular."[2]

Although Celse-Bénigne possessed fine qualities of mind and heart, yet it may easily be conceived that, leading such a life, there would be some difficulty in marrying him. In fact, three years rolled by, at the end of which his mother's active and unceasing endeavors were rewarded by the conclusion of an alliance similar to that she had procured for Françoise, "in which she found nothing to regret, nothing to desire." In 1624 she asked for Celse-Bénigne the hand of Marie de Coulanges, daughter of Philippe, Lord de la Tour-Coulanges, Councillor of State and Secretary of the Exchequer. The young lady was very rich, exceedingly amiable, solidly pious, and specially noted for her charming sweetness. Mother de Chantal's proposal was favorably received, and she blessed God "for bestowing upon her son such a piece of good fortune." "And to tell the truth," writes Bussy-Rabutin, with a spark of pride, "it was a considerable advantage for the young lady also. The Baron de Chantal, young and handsome, the head of the Rabutins, was one of the most perfect cavaliers of his time, whether in brightness of intellect or in brilliant valor, by which he distinguished himself at a period in which glory was acquired by single combat."[1]

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[1] *Lettres de Sainte Chantal*, edit. Migne, p. 1022.

[2] *Ibid.* p. 1113.

The time for the marriage having arrived, both families earnestly endeavored to induce Mother de Chantal to be present at the ceremony. Celse-Bénigne, in particular, left nothing undone to win her consent. But, satisfied with having secured her son's happiness, she considered her task accomplished. As a religious, as the Foundress of an Order, she would not give such an example to the world and the cloister; therefore she positively refused to assist at the ceremony, though present in heart and prayers. "O God," she wrote to Madame de Coulanges, "how earnestly will I pour out my heart and my poor prayers before the sweet mercy of Our Lord, that He may vouchsafe to bless our dear young couple with His choicest graces, that they may have but one heart and one soul, and may live long and happily in His fear!"

Thus, from 1617 to 1624, those years so fruitful in events, during which we see Mother de Chantal traversing France, founding the convents of Grenoble, Bourges, Paris, and Dijon; forming and entertaining relations with St. Vincent de Paul, Cardinal de Bérulle, Père de Condren, and Angélique Arnauld; visiting Port-Royal, Maubuisson, the Carmelites, and the Penitents, everywhere multiplying good works, she was engaged in something else that historians have not noticed, namely, in procuring the marriage of her daughter and son. This last work she finished with the perfection that characterizes all her undertakings. "I wonder at God's providence in our regard," wrote the young Baron to his mother some time after his marriage. "Had you remained in the world, as we desired, had you taken the care to promote our interests that your maternal love and unparalleled prudence would have inspired, you could not have imagined me better settled than I am. God has given me in my marriage every advantage suited to my rank, age, and disposition."

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[1] *Vie abrégée*, p. 21.

This twofold task accomplished, it seems that the saint might have considered her mission toward her children ended. But is a mother's mission ever finished? In vain did business cares, like a torrent, overwhelm her; in vain did the love of God captivate her soul and raise it far above earth. Neither in the most absorbing occupations as Foundress of an Order, nor on the loftiest summits of detachment from earth and death to self, did she for one instant forget her children. She shared their joys; she endured their sorrows. The least events in their life were of interest to her. In a word, in all her intercourse with them she displayed, as we shall see, so great tenderness, so rare devotedness, solicitude so active, constant, and indefatigable, that, if her glory as a Foundress had not eclipsed all her other claims, if virgins consecrated to God and born of her spirit had not solicited the honor of her special protection, she might be regarded as the patroness of mothers and orphans.

CHAPTER II.

THE VISITATION IS RAISED TO THE RANK OF A RELIGIOUS ORDER UNDER THE RULE OF ST. AUGUSTINE.—FOUNDATION OF THE CONVENTS OF MOULINS, GRENOBLE, BOURGES, AND PARIS.—ANGÉLIQUE ARNAULD OF PORT-ROYAL BEGS ADMISSION INTO THE ORDER.

1617—1620.

MEANWHILE the Visitation was beginning to organize and spread abroad. The Constitutions were drawn up; the authorization to erect the Congregation into an Order under the Rule of St. Augustine, petitioned for by St. Francis de Sales of the Holy See, was, thanks to the patronage of Cardinal Bellarmine, daily expected. Two convents were already flourishing: one at Annecy, under the government of Mother de Chantal herself; the other at Lyons, under that of Mother Favre. A third was being established at Moulins, under the direction of Mother de Bréchard, and preparations were being made for a fourth at Grenoble.

It will be remembered that in July, 1616, St. Francis de Sales had received very urgent letters, in which the Archbishop of Lyons, Administrator of the diocese of Autun, to which Moulins belonged, Marshal de Saint-Géran, Governor of Bourbonnais,[1] the Mayor and Councilmen of Moulins, asked of him the establishment of a house of the Visitation in their city; that in these letters they begged him to send Mother de Chantal herself to begin the work; and that he, unwilling to deny the earnest request of persons of their rank, had taken steps to comply with their desire; but that he had finally decided upon sending Mother de Bréchard instead of Mother de Chantal, who was in ill-health at the time and, moreover, very busily engaged with the compilation of the Rules.

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[1] Jean-François de la Guiche, Count de la Palisse, Lord de Saint-Géran, Chevalier of the King's Orders, Marshal of France, and Governor of Bourbonnais.

On the 11th of August Mother de Bréchard left Annecy, and after stopping one day at Chambéry, another at Grenoble, and two or three in Lyons, arrived at Moulins on the 20th, accompanied by three professed Sisters belonging to the house of Annecy. They were received politely, but coldly. The people and the nobility, hoping to see Mother de Chantal, whose reputation was great even at that early period, were somewhat disappointed at the arrival of a nun whose name even was unknown to them; therefore, after a few visits of curiosity and courtesy, the Sisters were almost abandoned. They were often without bread for the refectory. The close of the year found them unable to pay their rent, and Madame de Gouffier, their protectress, was forced to apply for assistance to her aunt, Madame du Buysson, and to her sister, Madame d'Anlezy, whom she entreated to pawn their jewels, in order to prevent the nuns from being turned out of their house. Happily, the virtue of the Sisters was greater than their trials. By degrees, the occasional visitors at the Visitation parlor perceived that Mother de Bréchard was a woman of eminent sanctity, that Sister Gabrielle Bally hid the rarest humility under a recollected exterior, and that little Sister Jeanne-Marie de la Croix, scarcely seventeen years old, was an angel of innocence and candor. Indifference soon changed into enthusiasm, and the marvellous virtues of the poor Visitandines became the general topic of conversation. Assistance arrived and novices, too, among them Hélène de Chastelluz, who belonged to one of the noblest families of the province.

The childhood of Hèlène was remarkable. The youngest daughter of a high family, she had, with the prospect of one day bearing the crosier, been shut up very young in a rich abbey of which one of her aunts was Abbess. But this aunt died too soon. Hélène was only seven or eight years old, and the provisionary government of the community was committed to a Sister who, after tasting authority, found it too sweet to resign. Thence arose a secret, but deeply rooted, hatred against Hélène, and unnumbered were the vexations heaped upon her, with the view to disgust her with the cloistered life. They became such that the Count de Chastelluz was, at last, obliged to withdraw his daughter for a time. She returned home, and took up her abode with her sister, the Countess de Roussillon. This was toward the year 1608. *The Introduction to a Devout Life*, just published, fell into Hélène's hands. She was charmed with it. Her heart was pure, and if as yet it had produced no fruit, it was owing to lack of cultivation. This admirable book wrought a complete change in her, and from that day she commenced to lead a new life.

Meanwhile Count de Chastelluz, trusting that absence had softened the feelings of the provisionary Abbess, and remarking Hélène's increase in piety, desired her return to her abbey. She obeyed, taking with her the precious little book that had so charmed her. She lent it to the Sisters, above all to the youngest, who devoured it, and all became inflamed with an earnest longing after religious perfection.

Who would dream that such an influence could awaken the jealousy of the Abbess! It did so, however, and her enmity became more violent than ever. The proud and ambitious woman trembled lest Hélène, who had so completely gained the confidence of the Sisters, should soon attempt to deprive her of her crosier. She redoubled her persecution, and at last drove her from the abbey under the pretext that she was troubling the peace of the community by her plots and cabals.

Hélène again obliged to return to the world, and the Countess de Roussillon, her sister, having fallen ill, she went to take care of her.

Roussillon is only three leagues from Autun, and very near to Monthelon. Madame de Chantal, who had not yet become a religious, was tenderly devoted to the Countess, and often visited her. It was there that she saw Hélène, then only nineteen, pious and fervent, but sad and discouraged, wandering from the cloister to the world and from the world to the cloister, uncertain of her future, and ignorant of God's will in her regard. She was touched to the heart by the young girl's sadness. She discovered in her a heroic spirit, and trembling lest the divine spark should be extinguished and Jesus Christ robbed of a spouse, she used every argument to rouse in her soul a high idea of her vocation. Hélène set out for the third time, determined to endure everything, to humble herself, to die rather than rob her Spouse of a single hour consecrated to Him. But man had placed Hélène in this abbey. God wished her elsewhere. A year or two later the Order of the Visitation was commenced, and soon after Mother de Bréchard passed through Burgundy and appeared in Moulins. This was for Hélène a light in the midst of darkness, and she now understood what God desired of her. Casting away a crosier which, in spite of so many intrigues, could not be snatched from her grasp, abandoning one of the richest abbeys in the kingdom, she entered a convent poor and unknown, taking with her the glory of a great name, the support of a distinguished family, a very large dowry, and, above all, virtues and talents of the highest order.

Let us listen to Mother de Bréchard writing to Mother de Chantal. She seems at a loss to give the latter an adequate idea of the great good fortune that had befallen her convent. "The entrance of this dear novice," she says, "recalls that of St. Bernard into the Order of Citeaux. Until the arrival of that illustrious novice the Order was almost forgotten; but after the reception of the incomparable Bernard it was multiplied as the stars of the heavens. Our dear novice is his equal in birth. She has a bright, quick, and penetrating mind, noble and generous instincts, and is greatly disposed to virtue and piety. She is of a gentle, retiring, modest, and affable disposition, but all fire and zeal for holiness and perfection. I foresee no other difficulty in directing her than that of restraining her fervor, lest advancing too rapidly, she stumble on her way."[1]

To this first blessing God soon added a second. There was in Orléans a holy priest named M. de la Coudre, who, full of love for the Blessed Virgin, had frequently offered himself to be her slave forever. As often as he renewed this offering, he heard an interior voice saying: "Go, devote thyself to the service of my daughters." Not knowing how to interpret these words, he went to serve the Sisters of the Madeleine, of the Order of Fontevrault. These religious were most happy to have him, for he was universally regarded as a saint. But he had no sooner reached the convent than he was seized with disquietude so great that he could not sleep. He left Orléans, and instinctively took the road to Moulins, knowing neither why he went nor how long he should stay. He simply followed the spirit that led him. On his arrival, he learned that a convent known by the name of *Holy Mary* had lately been established there. Through devotion to the Mother of God, he went to the new convent to say Mass, and, as he was making his genuflection, his peace of soul returned. "This is the place, O Mary, my Heavenly Queen," he exclaimed, "this is the place in which thou dost wish thy slave to devote himself to thy perpetual service, in the person of thy daughters." After Mass, he asked to see the Superioress, who, feeling convinced that he had come on the part of God, accepted him as confessor of the community. He rendered the Sisters most valuable service for sixteen or seventeen years, leading all the while a saintly and retired life. He practised heroic poverty, saying graciously when any remuneration was offered him:

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[1] *Vies des plusieurs Supérieures de l'Ordre de la Visitation*, 1 vol. 4to; Paris, 1693. Mother Marie-Hélène de Chastelluz, p. 215.

"Oh, never mind that! The Lady whom I serve gives me so abundant a salary that, through respect to her, I dare not accept anything from others; and besides, I daily experience that very little suffices a man who desires to live like a true disciple of Jesus Christ." [1]

Whilst one convent was being founded in Moulins, preparations were being made for another at Grenoble. There was in that place a lady of rank, Madame Le Blanc. She was the wife of the senior President of the Parliament of Grenoble. She was beautiful, intelligent, and rich. Formed to please, she entered with zest into the pleasures of the world, apparently the happiest woman in Grenoble. But, in reality, like all great souls, who cannot be fully satisfied by the love of perishable things, she was tormented with secret disgust in the midst of the most splendid entertainments. She was so weary of her manner of life that, when walking in the country, she used to sigh with envy on seeing the shepherds sporting and singing among their flocks. She considered her life, brilliant as it was, "a misfortune compared with that of those villagers exempt by their lowly condition from the great weariness that overwhelmed her." When St. Chantal visited Lyons in 1615, for the foundation of a convent in that city, Madame Le Blanc went thither to see her, opened to her her heart, and after some hours' conversation with the saint, felt herself entirely changed. The vanity of the world was revealed to her along with the impossibility of finding in it happiness. She cast aside her rich apparel, arrayed herself as simply as her position would allow, applied assiduously to prayer, and thenceforth went every year to make a retreat of ten days in the convent of Lyons. Nor did her piety stop here. She soon conceived a project of having a house of the Visitation in Grenoble.

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[1] *Fondation du troisième Monastère de la Visitation Sainte-Marie en la Ville de Moulins, établi le* 21 *août*, 1616, MS. folio.

To insure success, she first obtained that St. Francis de Sales should preach the Advent of 1616 and the Lent of 1617 in that city. Then taking advantage of the enthusiasm excited by the holy Bishop's sermons, she succeeded in renting a house and furnishing it according to the Rules of the Visitation. To this she added everything necessary for the establishment of a religious community.

St. Francis de Sales could not resist such earnestness. He summoned Mother de Chantal to come to Grenoble and "profit by God's moment," as he said. "Every one," he added, "approves the plan. Our good Lady Le Blanc is full of zeal for the work, and I cherish a sweet hope that God will bless her intentions, if we are fortunate enough to humble ourselves as we ought before Him who wishes to glorify Himself in our littleness. I beg you, my dearest Mother, quietly to prepare our little bees to swarm on the first fine day, and come to labor in the new hive, for which Heaven is preparing much dew." [1]

Mother de Chantal promptly obeyed the summons, accompanied by Sister Marie-Péronne de Châtel, four or five professed Sisters from the convent of Annecy, and four young ladies of Grenoble, whom Madame Le Blanc had sent to Savoy to study their vocation. They had taken the religious habit, and they were destined to be the foundation-stones of the new house, which was solemnly established on Monday, April 8, 1618, by the coadjutor of the diocese of Grenoble, the Bishop of Chalcedon, in presence of a large concourse.

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[1] Letter of March 11, 1618.

Mother de Chantal's short stay in Grenoble, about a week, was marked by no particular incident. Important business having suddenly recalled her to Annecy, she set out before the end of April, after having received some novices and appointed Mother Marie-Péronne de Châtel Superioress. She left the new convent in such fervor that it was, according to several great servants of God, a furnace of divine love. It was, likewise, so popular that the Sisters were overwhelmed with kind services and presents. The ladies of the city even went so far as to send them on Sundays and feasts their dinner ready prepared, that, as they said, the Sisters, like St. Magdalen, might remain all day at the feet of the Saviour without being distracted by the cares of Martha.[1]

St. Francis de Sales left Grenoble before Mother de Chantal, and on reaching Annecy found letters from Rome, among them the long-expected Brief, by which Paul V. authorized him to erect the Congregation of the Visitation into a Religious Order, under the Rule of St. Augustine. He at once wrote to hasten Mother de Chantal's return, as her presence was necessary at the moment in which, by a solemn and supreme act, he was about to put the finishing stroke to the work at which they had been laboring eight years. Together they re-read the Constitutions, discussed them anew, modified certain parts, and, after an exact and definitive examination of five months, St. Francis de Sales adopted them, "ordaining and establishing by our authority," he says, "yes, rather by the authority Apostolic committed to us for this, that the said Constitutions should forever be inviolably observed and kept."

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[1] *Fondation du quatrième Monastère de la Visitation Sainte-Marie en la Ville de Grenoble, établi le* 8 *avril*, 1618, MS. folio.

Eight days later, on October 6, 1618, St. Francis de Sales repaired to the convent, accompanied by his Vicar-General, his Chapter, M. Michel Favre, confessor of the community, and two witnesses canonically appointed. There, after the reading of the Brief of Paul V., the Bishop, in the name of the Sovereign Pontiff, solemnly erected the Congregation of Holy Mary into a Religious Order under the Rule of St. Augustine. By the same authority Apostolic, he declared that henceforth the Sisters and Religious of the said Congregation should be entitled to all the immunities, privileges, indults, and concessions granted Religious Orders living under the said Rule, and enjoined upon them the observance of inclosure according to the Decree of the Sacred Council of Trent, with all the laws attached to solemn vows. As Mother de Chantal and Mother Marie-Madeleine de Mouxy had not yet disposed of all their property, he gave them six months to settle their temporal affairs and prepare for their solemn vows. The Act of this ceremony was drawn up and inscribed upon the records of the bishopric of Geneva.[1]

Thus were decreed and definitively laid down the general lines of the Order of the Visitation. It was, indeed, widely different from the original plan conceived by St. Francis de Sales and so long hoped for by St. Chantal. After eight years of trial, uncertainty, and multiplied reflections; after eight years of contradiction and opposition from men and events, or rather from Him who governs men and gives rise to events, the two saintly Founders had reached an end precisely contrary to that intended. Thus does God, always sweet and always strong, in the foundation of Religious Orders as in the establishment of empires, sport with the views of men; and saints, as well as conquerors, are in His hands but instruments and means for the accomplishment of His will.

The following day, October 17, 1618, Mother de Chantal set out for Bourges, where His Lordship, André Frémyot, had everything in readiness for the foundation of a convent. On her way, she passed through Lyons and Moulins, making only a short stay at the former place. In the latter, she was overjoyed at the simplicity, humility, and fervor of the religious. She found but one fault, namely, the too frequent use of corporal mortifications, always a little to be feared where Mother de Bréchard was. From Moulins she proceeded to Bourges in a carriage sent for her by her brother. She was accompanied by Sisters Anne-Marie Rosset and Anne-Catherine de Beaumont, who had come with her from Annecy, and Sister Gabrielle Bally, whom she had brought from Moulins. The inhabitants of Bourges, who loved Archbishop Frémyot, went out in crowds to meet his sister.[1]

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[1] See Note II., end of Vol. II., this Act transcribed from the authentic original, deposited and preserved in the convent at Annecy.

Next day, November 4th, His Lordship celebrated Holy Mass in the new convent, which he had himself bought and furnished for the Sisters. He exposed the Blessed Sacrament, established inclosure, gave fifteen hundred livres to defray first expenses, and lavished so many gifts upon the new house that, becoming alarmed at such abundance, Mother de Chantal wrote to St. Francis de Sales to acquaint him of her embarrassment. We may easily divine the saintly Bishop's reply: "*Ask for nothing, refuse nothing.* Use all things without affection and without scruple, with liberty and detachment. This is the highest perfection." But owing as much to the permission of God, who would not allow this house to be founded without some trials, as to the carelessness of a period in which it was more easy to command than to be obeyed, poverty sometimes made itself felt. Such was the negligence of the Archbishop's stewards that, during the first three months, the Sisters were sometimes in want of bread. Mother de Chantal, nothing troubled, used to assemble her daughters in the refectory at the hour fixed by the Rule, and exhort them to trust in God. Two or three times it happened that, just as the *Benedicite* was being said, the bell rang, and some good women, who could not have known their need, handed in a loaf of fresh white bread for each of the Sisters.[2]

St. Chantal did not remain long in Bourges. She was expected in Paris, where there was some hope of being able to found a house. St. Francis de Sales, who had just arrived in the suite of the Prince-Cardinal of Savoy, thought the time favorable, and wrote to our saint to come promptly and try what could be done. "It is a risk," he wrote, "and even worse than that; but let it be undertaken, trusting to the providence of God, the protection of the Blessed Virgin and the glorious St. Joseph." When Mother de Chantal informed her brother of her intended departure, His Lordship stoutly opposed it, declaring that he would not give her his carriage, and that he would forbid her being furnished with any kind of conveyance. "My Lord," said the saint to him decidedly, "obedience has strong legs. We shall go on foot rather than disobey." André Frémyot, full of admiration, withdrew his opposition, and the saint commenced preparations for the new foundation. She sent to Moulins for Sister Jeanne-Marie de la Croix and two novices, borrowed Sister Anne-Catherine de Beaumont from Bourges, and with these four companions started on the evening of Good Friday for her new mission. She spent Easter Sunday in Orléans, and on Quasimodo Sunday, which fell that year on the 6th of April, entered Paris "in a hired carriage, and with only nineteen testers in her purse." [1]

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[1] *Fondation du cinquième Monastère de la Visitation en la Ville de Bourges, le* 4 *novembre*, 1618, MS. folio.

[2] *Mémoires* of Mother de Chaugy, p. 169.

Paris was not then what it is now, though already a large city full of bustle and noise, the battle-field upon which good and evil met in formidable conflict. It was there that Cardinal de Bérulle, Père de Condren, St. Vincent de Paul, and a host of others were bravely struggling for the triumph of truth and virtue, when, in 1619, St. Francis de Sales and St. Chantal came to join the heroic band, and establish another altar of propitiation in the great capital of error and depravity.

Scarcely had Mother de Chantal appeared in Paris when a thousand passions began to heave and swell. The raillery that in 1610 had assailed the Order in Annecy was renewed in Paris in 1619. Even communities of religious women were startled by the proposed foundation. Mother Angélique Arnauld of Port-Royal, writing to St. Chantal, says: "Some who visit here speak with singular contempt of your new Institute. They think that people enter your convents only to live at their ease. . . . There are even members of the secular and regular clergy who speak of it in the same manner. They tell me that, were I to embrace your Institute, I should lose the esteem I now enjoy. I answer quietly, however, that your Rule was drawn up by the greatest Doctor of the Holy Church (St. Augustine), and your Constitutions by a great and holy Bishop, and that, consequently, they must be good. Then I listen humbly to all they have to say. But to some one who told me that it is your custom every morning to ask each Sister what she would like to have for dinner, I replied bluntly that such is very far from the truth."[1]

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[1] St. Chantal herself wrote the account of this foundation in the *Convent-Book* of the convent of Paris. It is from this authentic document that we take these details. Whatever else we give concerning the establishment of this house is drawn from a manuscript history of the foundation of the convent of Paris, written from notes furnished by Mother de Beaumont, the whole revised by St. Chantal.

St. Francis de Sales reveals to us the secret of the alarm awakened in religious communities. "Would you believe," he wrote to Mother de Chantal, "that some servants of God have this day told me that the meekness and piety of our Institute accord so well with French taste that you will deprive other religious houses of their popularity, and that when people shall have once seen this Madame de Chantal they will care only for her." Plots arose on all sides against the undertaking. The good and the bad united to prevent the foundation, and Cardinal de Retz was beset with petitions to that effect. Every day brought new and unreasonable conditions, one as unacceptable as the other. "The Sisters might commence their foundation, if they would give fifteen thousand crowns to assist another establishment." "They would not be allowed to settle in the city, unless they consented to take charge of the Andriettes and the Magdalens, both Congregations for penitents."[2]

"If you do not accept these conditions," said one of the regular clergy, "you must go." "Very well, Father," was Mother de Chantal's reply, "we will go rather than swerve from the end of our Institute. We came in obedience, we shall go in obedience." This was said so humbly that the religious, struck by her tone and manner, asked her whether she had not made a vow of humility. "Oh, would to God, my dear Father," she answered with a smile, "that we knew how to practise that virtue like a fourth vow!" The storm of opposition lasted about three weeks; "after which," says Mother de Chantal, "His Eminence, Cardinal de Retz, on his return from the court, took pen and paper, and wrote permission for our establishment, which circumstance was regarded by a very eminent priest as a miracle."[1]

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[1] *Lettres de Saint François de Sales*, vol. iii. p. 364, edit. Blaise.

[2] *Mémoires* of Mother de Chaugy, p. 171.

Next day, May 1, 1619, St. Francis de Sales presided at the ceremony of installation, preached, and established inclosure. As his own stay in Paris was to be short, he placed the spiritual direction of the community in the hands of him whom all Paris then called M. Vincent, and whom the Church and the whole Catholic world now honor under the celebrated name of St. Vincent de Paul. Let us here admire the providence of God. St. Francis de Sales was soon to die. He had but three years longer to live, and during that time St. Chantal was not to see him again, excepting on the last day, as it were, of his mortal career, and then only hurriedly and without being able to disclose to him her soul. At the moment this mild and prudent guide was about to disappear, he pointed out to her another, neither less mild nor less prudent. In confiding her to Vincent de Paul, St. Francis de Sales anticipated, as it were, his own passing away. Thus does God ever proportion His help to our needs. If He calls a simple woman to a sublime vocation, He sends angels to her assistance, and bids them bear her up in their arms.

To the first storms that assailed this foundation others soon succeeded. The report was spread that the Sisters were immensely rich, thus cutting off alms and increasing their already extreme poverty. They were in want of the very necessaries of life. To complete their misfortune, the plague broke out in Paris, driving thence, not only the court, but almost every one, excepting the poor. The great city became a desert. Grass grew in the streets. Of all who had taken an interest in the foundation, some had fled, the others remained shut up in their houses. Only one very pious lady, Madame Amelot, the wife of President Amelot, continued to visit the Sisters. She always left the convent parlor with an aching heart, and went weeping to Father Binet for consolation.

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[1] Mother de Chantal's own words.

"Alas! Father," she would say to him, "what will become of those good servants of God?"

"Fear not, Madame," was the answer of the man of faith, "the more the Daughters of Holy Mary are humbled, the more will God one day exalt them and give them increase."

The plague ceased, but the Sisters' privations remained unchanged. Having no chairs, St. Chantal and her little community were obliged to sit on the floor; and during the rigorous nights of December and January they had neither wood nor blankets. Several who, for want of room, were forced to sleep in the attic, on beds made up of a bundle of fagots, used to awake in the morning covered with snow.

In these critical circumstances Mother de Chantal, as was her wont, had recourse to God. Every day, on the approach of dinner hour, she went to the church, and there on her knees said the *Pater* to beg the Father of the family for the daily bread of which they stood in need. When some assistance arrived, she discontinued this *Pater*, saying that it was her delight to possess only what was necessary, and even that very sparingly, as became religious. Having this, they ought not to ask for a superabundance, but await what it might please God to send them.

Long after the Sisters, whose happiness it had been to share those days of poverty and want with their Foundress, used to declare that never had they been happier than then, owing to her great and holy joy. "Though badly clothed, fed, and lodged, they considered themselves still too well off." What admirable detachment in young girls reared in opulence!

The spirit of poverty, courage, and cheerfulness in the midst of want were not the only virtues they admired in Mother de Chantal. Among a thousand others, her zeal for the observance of the Rule, the rarest humility, and the purest love of God shone pre-eminent. One day some Sisters, through inattention, committed a slight act of irreverence before the Blessed Sacrament. The saint took upon herself the reparation of the fault. When the community assembled for dinner, she asked God's pardon for the Sisters, kissed their feet, and took her own meal seated on the floor. Another day she sharply reproved a Sister for having neglected a small observance, ordered her to take the discipline, and added that a religious who neglects the least of her Rules knows not the value of the blood of Jesus Christ. "Sister," she said one day to one of her daughters, "last night I had a very serious thought. I imagined myself on the brink of hell, and justly; for what am I doing for God? Nothing at all." The tone of her voice, whilst uttering these words, was inexpressible.

As there are no souls destined for greater labors than the Founders of Religious Orders, so there are none created with more love and enriched with more natural gifts, with virtues more amiable or more heroic. But as far as we can judge from the life of the ten or twelve extraordinary individuals who bear this title in the Church, the most striking feature in their character, that which finishes and perfects it, is detachment, defined by pious writers death to self. Chosen instruments in the hands of God, they must be mere tools, unresisting and devoid of self-guidance. The less they rely upon self, the greater their value. As soon as they renounce self, God takes possession of them, and finding them supple and submissive, ready for everything, dead to everything, He does great things with them and in them.

Mother de Chantal was one of these privileged creatures. For many years Almighty God had been turning her attention to the little virtues; but in 1619 He suddenly excited in her heart an intense desire to possess this sovereign virtue. It was the second time she had felt this attraction. During the Holy Week of 1616 she had experienced the most ardent longing to die to everything, "to abandon, consecrate, and sacrifice herself entirely and irrevocably to God, so that He might do with her, in her, and through her whatever He pleased." She made known her desire to St. Francis de

Sales, and by his advice wrote on Tuesday in Holy Week an act of abandonment to God, by which she vowed to despoil herself of everything, "not excepting or reserving anything whatever," to die entirely and absolutely to self.

But this was merely the prelude. In a retreat, from the 10th to the 20th of August, 1619, she suddenly felt, and in a degree before unknown to her, and which at first sight terrified her, the necessity of dying to self, of giving up everything. She immediately wrote to St. Francis de Sales; and there resulted between them during those ten days an interchange of letters the most beautiful of all their correspondence. They are eloquent and courageous, filled with spirituality the deepest and the most divine. In them we see in what language the saints speak, and how far in generous souls death to self and detachment from all things can be carried. "My God! my true Father," wrote St. Chantal, "how deep the knife has penetrated! Is it possible for this state of mind to last? O Jesus, Jesus, deign to prolong my happiness!" And again, "O God, how easy it is to resign exterior things! But to give up our skin, our flesh, our bones, to penetrate to the very marrow of our interior, which, it seems to me, is what we have done, is a great thing, difficult, nay, impossible save by the grace of God. To Him alone, then, is glory due; and may it be given to Him forever!" [1]

And St. Francis de Sales replied: "O Jesus! what blessings and consolations to my soul to know that you are now divested of all things before God! . . . To see neither Moses nor Elias, but Jesus alone, my dearest Mother, is the end of the Transfiguration. The glory of the spouse is to be alone with her King, that she may say to Him: *My beloved is mine, and I am His.* You must now remain forever entirely despoiled, my very dear Mother."

Entering with the enthusiasm of the saints into this way of absolute detachment, desiring to place Mother de Chantal on the highest pinnacle of death to self, he added: "My dearest Mother, tell Our Lord this evening that you renounce all the virtues, desiring them only in such measure as God will give them to you, wishing to have no care to acquire them but inasmuch as His divine goodness will make use of you in this way for His good pleasure.

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[1] See Letters of St. Francis de Sales and St. Chantal, August 8, 9, 10, 1619.

"Think no more of the friendship nor of the union that God has established between us, nor of your children, nor of your heart, nor of your soul, nor of anything whatever, for you have given them all back to God! . . . Oh, how happy I am to know that you are in so desirable a state!"[1]

Whilst Mother de Chantal was thus advancing in a way along which we shall still see her taking many a heroic step, the house in Paris was founded, and crowds of postulants were asking admittance. Nearly all belonged to distinguished families, and the most of them had been called by extraordinary vocations. "But among them all," say the old *Mémoires*, "she who was an unparalleled consolation and, as it were, a true child of joy to our unique Mother, and of benediction to the convent of Paris, was our highly esteemed Sister Hélène-Angélique Lhuillier, drawn to our state of life by the cords of love."

Hélène-Angélique Lhuillier belonged to a noble family. She was young, rich, flattered by the world, to whose follies and luxuries she was devoted. It was in the midst of these seductions, when all was smiling around her, as she herself expressed it, that God drew her to Himself, but so gently that she was conscious of it only when she found herself a captive.

The instrument of this miraculous change was, as usual, the holy Bishop of Geneva, to whom she made a general confession. Perceiving her extreme dread of the cloister, the saint told her to wait, to be in no hurry, and that, for himself, he would not cast a grain of sand in the balance to make her swerve to one side or the other, to the world or to religion. Had the young worldling been more forcibly dealt with, she would, perhaps, have resisted: as it was, she suspected nothing under the guidance of so gentle a hand. And yet God was doing His work. Little by little, detachment from the world, the love of true and solid virtue were penetrating her inmost soul. The interior voice of the Heavenly Spouse was constantly sounding in her ear: "All passes away. I alone remain. Why bargain so long? You must be mine, whatever it may cost." To quiet this voice, she determined to try the religious life, and, under pretext of making a retreat, she entered the convent. But scarcely had the door closed upon her than intense repugnance arose in her soul. What! to be always poor, always humbled, always led like a child, she who possessed freedom, wealth, and consideration! She passed three weeks sick, never leaving her room, and mentally revolving three crosses, among which she knew not how to choose: the cross of marriage, which appeared to her a hell according to the spirit; the cross of the religious life, a true purgatory according to the senses; and the distasteful cross of remaining an old maid in the world.

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[1] Letters of August 9, 10, 1619.

On the feast of the Visitation, whilst on her way to the convent chapel to make her devotions, she went to bid Mother de Chantal good-morning. The saint handed her a letter from St. Francis de Sales. Hélène took it with a beating heart, but, without saying a word, decided at last to obey, whatever it might cost her. She entered the chapel, opened the letter and, in the twinkling of an eye, saw all, and consented to all. "It is settled," she said to Madame de Villeneuve, her sister, who was reading the letter with her, "it is settled. I am a nun. I shall never leave this house." Madame de Villeneuve, who had made the strongest opposition to the project, was also touched by the same movement of grace. "You are right, dear sister," she replied; "if you do not become a religious you will never have peace."

That very evening, after a loving farewell to her afflicted father, she entered the convent, "and cast herself headlong into the arms of obedience."

The news of her step set all Paris astir. Her relatives assembled, blaming M. Lhuillier and persuading him to go and demand his daughter's return. He did so. But after conversing with her for two hours and a half, he was vanquished by her firmness, and gave her permission to follow her attraction.

Mademoiselle Lhuillier's vocation was one of the greatest blessings that God bestowed upon the convent of Paris. Besides a considerable dowry and the support of a distinguished family, she took with her a fund of talent and virtue that made her one of the pillars of the rising Order.

The dowry of the new novice amounted to forty-five thousand livres. As soon as it was paid, St. Chantal began to take active steps toward procuring letters patent from the King, and a suitable house. That occupied by the Sisters for two years "was situated between two tennis-courts, and day and night they were disturbed by the noise of the players." It was, besides, too small for the daily increasing community. The letters patent were obtained through M. Lhuillier, who was very influential in the Parliament; but immense difficulties had to be overcome before they succeeded in finding a house. Day by day, the saint traversed Paris, and after each fruitless attempt returned to the foot of the tabernacle, lovingly complaining: "My God! where, then, shall I lodge Thy spouses?" Of all the houses she visited, one alone suited. It was the mansion of the Zamet family, Rue Saint-Antoine. But it was valued at forty-eight thousand livres, an enormous sum for the time, and, moreover, it appeared too fine for a convent. As, however, none other could be found, they ventured to consult St. Francis de Sales. His answer was true to himself. "The only objection to the Zamet mansion is, it appears, that it is too fine. Well, for want of one that is just fine enough, we must be contented with one that is too fine." They bought it, then, for forty-eight thousand livres, which were paid with Mademoiselle Lhuillier's dowry. After signing the deed, Mother de Chantal said that she had given more tears to God for the house than pieces of money. Twelve thousand livres more were expended in arranging it for monastic purposes, after which the community took possession of it toward the middle of 1621.

The facts just stated, namely, St. Francis de Sales' visit, Mother de Chantal's protracted stay, Mademoiselle Lhuillier's vocation, and the foundation of a convent of the Visitation in Paris, produced a great effect in the capital and excited deep enthusiasm among the devout. Visitors at the parlors of the Visitation constantly met personages of the most eminent virtue, namely, St. Vincent de Paul, who had accepted the direction of the convent with the title of Superior; the illustrious Cardinal de Bérulle, who had long known Mother de Chantal, and who, as early as 1604, had predicted the high degree of virtue she would one day reach, and who, after one of his visits to her, left the parlor deeply moved and exclaiming: "Mother de Chantal is one of the most loving souls God has upon earth!" Père de Condren, whose teaching was so sublime that Cardinal de Bérulle used to write kneeling all that he heard him say, and whom St. Vincent de Paul never left without exclaiming: "No man has ever spoken as he," and who after an hour's conversation at the parlor drew from Mother de Chantal these words we have already cited: "If our Blessed Father is capable of instructing men, Père de Condren is capable of instructing angels;" M. André Duval, a celebrated Professor of the Sorbonne, whose peculiar gift was to restore peace to troubled souls, and who, though the spiritual director of such souls as St. Vincent de Paul, Madame Acarie, and numbers of the same stamp, did not hesitate to designate St. Francis de Sales and St. Chantal as "the two marvels of our age;" M. Gallemand, chosen by God to enlighten Madame Acarie upon her vocation to Carmel and to assist Madame de Sainte-Beuve in reforming the Ursulines, and who having met Madame de Chantal in Dijon had attempted to draw her to the Carmelites, but who never after came to the parlor of the Visitation without acknowledging his mistake and accusing himself of having sought to interfere in the work of God, and this so humbly that the Out-Sisters called him nothing but *the humble M. Gallemand;* M. de Renty and the Countess de Saint-Pol, whose name, purse, and heart we find connected with all the good works of this period; the Commander de Sillery, who used to date his conversion from the day upon which he first saw Madame de Chantal, and who from that moment became the influential and devoted friend, adviser, and protector of the Visitation, so that the name of "*our good commander*" is constantly met in the letters of St. Chantal and on every page of her history; the Lord Chancellor de Marillac, even more celebrated for his piety and good works than for his talents, and whose devotedness to the Carmelites did not prevent his being frequently seen at the Visitation; and, finally, Père Binet, that holy religious, who did not abandon the Sisters during the plague, and who, after conversing with Mother de Chantal, used to exclaim with undisguised admiration: "This saint's purity of love enraptures me!" To this long list many names, both of priests and laymen, might be added; but they will occur in the course of these pages as the auxiliaries of our saint in the foundation of her convents.

The very cloisters were stirred. The most fervent religious wrote to the venerable Mother, soliciting her friendship, asking her advice, and begging her to visit their convents and revive regular observance. But no one was more captivated than Mother Angélique Arnauld, and the history of the relations between the Foundress of the Visitation and the Abbess of Port-Royal is too celebrated to be here passed over. It was St. Francis de Sales who first brought together these two great women, so worthy of each other, we might say, had not the latter deplorably disappointed the hopes she then raised. When the holy Bishop of Geneva visited Paris, in 1619, Mother Angélique had reached the most brilliant period of her career. An Abbess at fourteen, she did not hesitate three years later to undertake the reform of her Abbey of Port-Royal, and she succeeded far beyond her expectations. She made it a school of faith, regularity, and fervor. Victorious over formidable difficulties, in the midst of which she displayed masculine courage, surrounded with a halo of premature glory, she undertook at twenty-eight another and, perhaps, even a more difficult reform, that of the Abbey of Maubuisson. Not less occupied at the same time with the reformation of herself, naturally haughty, hungering after sacrifices, always seeking directors, and yet listening to those only that spoke as she herself, and with reason, for at that time she spoke well, nay, even better than any of them; always dissatisfied, however, with this method, since it was mere self-guidance, she had scarcely heard of the arrival in Paris of the holy Bishop of Geneva than she determined to see him. She did so at Maubuisson and, like every one else, fell under his influence, though strange to say she was won, not by his mildness, but by his firmness. It was the first time that she had met a man whose influence over her was powerful enough to move her very soul, and who, whilst applauding her projects, governed her. She opened to him her heart, made to him a general confession, kept him on one occasion nine successive days at Maubuisson, made him return thither as often as he could, and, after his departure, commenced with him a correspondence, which has never been published with sufficient care, but which, together with that of St. Francis de Sales and St. Chantal, is an inexhaustible fund of instruction for directors.[1] It is interesting to see how skilfully the holy Bishop analyzes "that extraordinary heart," tormented with a yearning after great things, that soul "always anxious to know whether it will be among the high or the low," that soul so moved to indignation at the sight of evil, so inclined to raillery, mockery, and anger "at the foolishness, the childishness, the feminine imperfections of her Sisters, who are too tender of themselves," that soul so greedy for sacrifices, so eager for perfection. With what gentleness St. Francis de Sales calms her feverish desire for corporal penance, gradually withdraws her from excessive austerities, and teaches her to apply all her energies to the correction of her faults! With what tact he makes her feel that, if God has called her to an extraordinary vocation, the way by which she is to attain it is not extraordinary; that it ought to be by the path of sweet, peaceful, and courageous humility; that this humility, this self-contempt, ought to be practised gently, peacefully, sweetly, and, above all, cheerfully and joyously! With what good sense, in order to ground her soul in tranquillity and meekness, does he teach her to give them the first place in all her actions! "Perform all your actions," he writes to her, "for example, walking, rising, sitting, retiring, eating, gently and calmly, and you will see," he adds, "that in three or four years you will have completely subdued that abrupt impetuosity."[1]

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[1] The whole of this correspondence might easily be collected. There are at Annecy several unpublished letters of St. Francis de Sales to Mother Angélique.

Some months of such direction wrought a complete change in Mother Angélique's soul, opened up to her horizons of which she had never dreamed, and prepared her for wonderful progress in the spiritual life. "If that holy man had remained in France," she wrote later, "I think I should have drawn great advantage from his direction." Alas, for her that he did not remain! From the gentle and prudent guidance of the Bishop of Geneva she fell, eager and haughty as she was, into the hands of an indiscreet enthusiast.

If Mother Angélique appreciated St. Francis de Sales, it was a still stronger feeling that took possession of her when she saw St. Chantal. That incomparable woman appeared formed to attract her. Younger than the saint by nineteen years, Mother Angélique took her for her mistress, for the directress of her soul. We have, addressed by her to Mother de Chantal, letters that are real confessions, full of the most touching humility. In them she avows her pride, her hasty imperiousness, her propensity to mockery and raillery; that impatience and interior ardor which she cannot restrain even when writing to the saint; that exterior vivacity, that promptitude of action, which urges her to run instead of to walk. But this, she says, she does not regret, since, as she thinks, it does not displease the saint. She deplores that attachment to her own opinions, which makes her so impatient of contradiction; and, in fine, on every page she alludes to what she calls her customary indiscretion and arrogance. In the midst of these faults, too real alas! but against which she was then energetically struggling, she manifested a determined will to follow good advice, great uprightness and candor, a thirst for humiliation and obedience, and many other indications of earnestness in the pursuit of perfection.[2]

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[1] Letters of June 25, 1619; September 12, 1619; December 16, 1619; February 4, 1620; May 14, 1620, etc.

[2] Letters of Mother Angélique to St. Chantal. See in particular those of September and November, 1621.

Her close contact with the two saintly Founders of the Visitation gradually enkindled in Mother Angélique a desire which of itself bears testimony to her greatness of soul. This desire was to lay down the abbatial crosier, which her youthful hand had borne so creditably, and enter the Visitation as a simple novice.

She formed the idea in 1619, and at once imparted it to St. Francis de Sales, whose only reply was a smile. A little later she wrote to him on the subject, and, as he did not respond, she persisted, and wrote letter after letter. St. Francis de Sales, very much embarrassed, "waived the matter as well as he could." The fact was, he did not wish the change. He found Angélique too positive, too imperious for his little Institute.[1]

Receiving only evasive replies from the Bishop, Mother Angélique had recourse to Mother de Chantal, from whom she met quite a different reception. The enthusiasm felt by Mother Angélique for our saint was, if we may venture to say so, fully reciprocated by her for the young Abbess of Port-Royal. Mother de Chantal loved this soul great as her own, imperious and haughty, as she herself could so easily have been, but so determined to conquer her pride, and who, fearing no sacrifice, had, when still very young, almost a child, accomplished for God things so great. The saintly Foundress joyfully welcomed Mother Angélique's proposition, gave her full consent, and promised to plead her cause with St. Francis de Sales.

In fact, on November 11, 1621, she wrote to him as follows: "I send you some letters from that dear child at Port-Royal, whose desires increase amid contradiction. . . . She tells me that, in spite of all her efforts to drive away the thought, she feels that God is calling her to the Visitation. I am of the same opinion. But, I entreat you, my dear Father, tell me frankly whether you also think so; for if you will only speak very clearly, as the only one having authority, I hope that others will be induced to adopt your opinion, since she has placed the matter entirely in your hands. Only tell me whether you believe it the will of God for her to leave Port-Royal; for, as to the obstacles to such a step, I make no account of them. They say, and the Bishop of Nantes told me the same yesterday, that her vows are null. She can, then, conscientiously leave. It only remains to know whether it will be more for the glory of God that she remain at Port-Royal, contrary to her inclinations and interior attraction, and the firm belief she has in the necessity of obedience (which is what I consider the most important for her), or whether she may come here, where there is every hope of her spiritual benefit. I cannot refrain from adding that, since God has given her so strong an inclination for this Institute, I believe it is for the increase of His glory by the service she will render the whole Order. I felt that I must tell you once more all that I think about this matter, and I beg you, my true Father, to let us hear from you as soon as possible."[1]

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[1] I do not say this at random, but after an attentive and serious study of all the documents, published and unpublished, relating to this affair, the voluminous file of which is, at present, in the archives of the Visitation at Annecy.

St. Francis de Sales had been greatly embarrassed by Mother Angélique's importunity; but he was still more so on seeing her supported by Mother de Chantal. Either because he was unwilling to displease the young Abbess by a positive refusal, or of the intervention of one so highly esteemed, he still hesitated, and, at last, resolved to submit the matter to the Pope. He wrote at once to Père Binet, who had joined his entreaties to those of Mother de Chantal, a letter in which are revealed his real sentiments upon the subject: "Reverend Father, with a thousand thanks for the trouble you have taken to write to me, I reply that, whilst in Paris, I never encouraged the desire expressed by the Abbess of Port-Royal to withdraw from the Order in which she has so usefully lived up to the present; and since returning home, I really have not had a thought about it. But in letter after letter, received from her, she earnestly remonstrated with me, to win me to her way of thinking, and to approve her wishes. I waived the matter as well as I could, and showed myself not only indifferent, but even opposed to her plan, until about eighteen months later, a person of great consideration [1] wrote to me in such terms upon the subject that I thought it well to decline being the sovereign judge in the case. . . . I wrote to her [2] that, since all I had said did not satisfy her, she might have her petition sent to Rome; that, if His Holiness granted her request, it would seem very probable that her desire is an expression of God's will; that if, on the contrary, His Holiness refused it, there remained nothing else for her to do but to humble herself and be resigned." [3]

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[1] Letter written during the first part of November, 1621.

To leave an Order less severe for one more so, Rome freely permits; but when the contrary is the case, as in the present instance, great difficulty is encountered. The young Abbess had to await an answer to her petition. Meantime Mother de Chantal left Paris, St. Francis de Sales died, and to crown her misfortunes, just as she lost her two guides, Mother Angélique became acquainted with Bishop Zamet and, through him, with the Abbé of Saint-Cyran, the miserable disseminator of Jansenism. Prouder and still more extravagant than Mother Angélique, and, whatever may be said to the contrary, wanting in the qualifications necessary for a director, the Abbé of Saint-Cyran, instead of calming her, as St. Francis de Sales had done, urged her on, added his own misguided zeal to the already too great ardor of his penitent, perplexed her understanding with discussions upon grace, and led her into heresy. She clung to the new sect with all the vehemence of her nature, the exaggeration of her character, and the obstinacy of her sex; and, preserving amid the wreck of faith some traces of moral beauty, retaining a certain greatness of soul even in the midst of the severe and gloomy tenets of Jansenism, she became the most perfect type of those virgins of whom the Archbishop of Paris used to say that they were "pure as angels, but proud as demons."

Many years were necessary to effect this transformation. The account of it belongs not to the present work, since communication ceased between Mother de Chantal, occupied with her numerous foundations, and Mother Angélique, hurried along by other influences. If any still existed, it is neither sufficiently important to be made a point of history nor sufficiently authentic to be accepted by grave critics.[1]

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[1] Mother de Chantal.

[2] The Abbess of Port-Royal.

[3] Letter of November 11, 1621.

We here close our account of the connection between Mother de Chantal and Mother Angélique of Port-Royal; but in doing so we shall propose a question that naturally arises. Which of the two erred in their opinion formed of Mother Angélique, St. Francis de Sales, who thought her unsuited to the Visitation, or St. Chantal, who believed she ought to enter it, as much for her own advantage as for that of the Order? Had Mother Angélique really taken the habit of the Visitation, what might have happened? Restrained by Mother de Chantal, her equal in firmness and energy, her superior in experience and holiness; associated to the labors of Mothers de Bréchard and Favre, so capable of understanding her and of being understood by her; developing in virtue with all her characteristic ardor, Mother Angélique might have been more brilliant, more fruitful in good works than even in her youth. Shielded from every danger by humility and obedience, flourishing, so to say, in the midst of sacrifice, would she have become, as she was capable of doing, a second St. Chantal? Or, and the question is no rash hypothesis, was that longing for obedience, though sincere at the moment, yet, even unknown to Mother Angélique, nothing more than the passing weariness of authority? Once in the cloister, would not that haughty spirit have revolted against control? Would she not have broken through every restraint, cast off every yoke, and, weary of obeying, would she not have saddened the old age of St. Chantal and, by open rebellion, dishonored the infancy of the Visitation? Restless and inquisitive, would she not have encountered that Jansenism which prowled so long and eagerly around the convents of the Visitation? Would she not have introduced it, and thus changed into *vile lead the pure gold* of the rising Order? This is God's secret. But what, then, is this question of vocation, so obscure, and so terrible on account of that very obscurity, since experienced guides like St. Francis de Sales and St. Chantal fail sometimes to agree upon it?

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[1] The Jansenists have made considerable efforts to prove that Mother de Chantal kept up most intimate relations with Mother Angélique and the Abbé of Saint-Cyran, even after the detention of the latter at Vincennes. They published letters and cited facts which, at the time of the saint's canonization, were submitted to prolonged and minute examination. Having had in our hands all the papers relating to this affair, we have thought it a duty to study it closely and treat it in a special note at the end of this volume.

CHAPTER III.

NEW FOUNDATIONS.—ST. CHANTAL LEAVES PARIS FOR LYONS.—ON HER WAY SHE FOUNDS THE CONVENT OF DIJON.—LAST INTERVIEW BETWEEN ST. FRANCIS DE SALES AND ST. CHANTAL.

1620—1622.

CONVENTS of the Visitation were beginning to multiply, and Almighty God was constantly proving His love for the new Order by lavishing graces upon the Foundresses and trials of all kinds upon the Sisters.

There was at Montferrand a young married lady, the Countess de Dalet, connected with the noblest families of Auvergne. One day, after receiving Holy Communion, she withdrew to a side-chapel to make her thanksgiving, when suddenly she was, as it were, rapt in ecstasy, and saw clearly the happiness of those souls that embrace the religious life. She remained in this state nearly an hour, at the end of which she felt her heart burning with divine love, disgusted with earthly pleasures, longing after retirement, silence, obedience, and poverty, and so changed that she no longer recognized herself.

Nothing had prepared her for this favor; for, although a good Catholic, she did not know even how to make mental prayer. Nor was there anything to explain to her either the aim of this heavenly grace or why God had given her so clear an idea of the happiness of the religious life. She had been married only a few years, she was perfectly happy with her husband, she was already the mother of two children, and in expectation of a third. The thought of becoming a religious had never occurred to her, not even in girlhood.

Ignorant of the meaning of such a favor and determined not to alarm her family, she kept her secret to herself. She commenced, however, to apply to prayer, in which she attained a high degree. She devoted herself, also, to good works, and to respond to what the favor she had received seemed to demand, she shared her purse with newly-founded convents and poor young girls desirous of entering them.

Two years had passed since her incomprehensible vision, when on January 18, 1620, Count de Dalet died almost suddenly, leaving his young widow crushed by grief. Only eleven days before, she had become a mother for the fourth time. One of her cousins, Mademoiselle de Blansac, came to cheer and console her. Almighty God had just tried this young lady in another way. After six months' fervent novitiate, she had left the Carmelites of Riom. Delicate health obliged her to return to a world which she detested, and to renounce the religious life, for which she felt the strongest attraction. When bidding a tearful adieu to the good Carmelites, the Prioress gave her as a keepsake a little book recently printed in Lyons, and called: *Constitutions for the Religious Sisters of the Visitation.* The two cousins passed a part of the night reading, or rather devouring, the little work, and charmed with the wisdom of its Rules, the beauty of their spirit, and the perfection of the interior life which forms their soul, they promised each other to do all in their power to establish at Montferrand a convent of the Visitation. In making this promise, Madame de Dalet had no other thought than to console her cousin and afford her the means of following her vocation. Her own choice was already made. If ever (and she dared hardly hope for it, being the mother of four children) God gave her the opportunity to consecrate herself to Him, she would become a daughter of St. Teresa. This was her daily dream. She little thought at the time that God was calling her, also, to the Visitation, that she would enter it after many years of severe trials, and that she would be one of its brightest jewels and firmest supports.

Mother Favre was appointed by St. Francis de Sales to make the foundation of Montferrand. She arrived on June 7, 1620, and, owing to her great virtue as much as to the protection of the Countess de Dalet, the house was established without difficulty. "The whole province is embalmed with Mother Favre's virtue," wrote Madame de Dalet, "and the best families esteem themselves happy in giving their daughters to a Mother who is the admiration of every one." St. Francis de Sales wrote to Mother Favre: "In fine, my dear child, you have been joyfully welcomed to Auvergne, a country of good people. I hope the future will correspond to the beginning and that, with God's help, you will reap a fine harvest from your labor. Ah! what joy to my heart to know that my Mother in Paris and my great daughter in Auvergne are both co-operating with the Holy Ghost in a work so holy and worthy!"[1]

Six weeks after the establishment of this convent, July 21st, another was erected at Nevers, though under very different circumstances.

The negotiations for the foundation gave no indications of the storm that burst over the new convent. Madame Marie-Aimée de Morville du Tertre was a young widow of twenty-two. St. Francis de Sales met her in Paris, where her worldliness exposed her to the greatest peril. His pious words impressed her so deeply that she conceived the idea of retiring to a convent in quality of benefactress; and to withdraw her from her Parisian associations St. Francis de Sales sent her to the Visitation at Moulins, then governed by Mother de Bréchard. She was received with all the honor due one recommended by the Founder; and a little later she wrote to St. Chantal that, instead of becoming merely a benefactress, it was her wish to join the community as a religious. There was at that moment question of a foundation in Nevers, the only difficulty being a want of funds. St. Francis de Sales proposed to Madame du Tertre, who brought a dowry of forty thousand livres, to reserve ten thousand for Nevers, and give to the house in Moulins thirty thousand, which was quite sufficient, since the profession of Mademoiselle de Chastelluz had already aided the community. Madame du Tertre gladly assented to the proposal, and even offered to become the foundress of the new convent, for which purpose she would take the veil at Nevers instead of at Moulins. She laid down only one condition, which was, that Mother de Bréchard should go with her to Nevers. Neither St. Francis de Sales nor St. Chantal saw any reason for refusing, and Mother de Bréchard was directed to undertake the new foundation; Mother Paul-Hiéronyme de Monthouz, a young but excellent religious, being sent to replace her in Moulins. These arrangements created a kind of insurrection among the good people of that city. Some objected to Madame du Tertre's dowry going to Nevers; others, and they were the greater number, Marshal de Saint-Géran and the whole municipality being among them, were unwilling to part with Mother de Bréchard. In vain did the latter solemnly promise to return in three months. So great was the fear of losing a religious of her eminent virtue, that the authorities forbade her to leave the city. They went farther. To remove every pretext and possibility of her going, the foundress herself was put under arrest in her own castle. This is the first instance met in the *Annals of the Visitation* of an occurrence that we shall see frequently repeated. St. Francis de Sales was both astonished and pleased. But the homage paid the virtue of one of his spiritual children gave him even less pleasure than did the energy she displayed on the occasion. Nothing disconcerted by obstacles, Mother de Bréchard, after applying for new orders from the holy Founders, changed her plan. Instead of going herself, she sent Mother Paul-Hiéronyme in her place, giving her for assistants in the work Sisters Marie-Hélène de Chastelluz and Marie-Jacqueline de Musy, both highly thought of in the province. She made them start very secretly, at three o'clock in the morning. They were already far on the road to Nevers before their departure was even suspected.

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[1] *Fondation inédite du Monastère de Montferrand.*

Unfortunately, Mother de Bréchard, whose reputation had preceded her, was expected in Nevers. When they saw in her stead a young Sister, whose name even they did not know, the disappointment was general. As she was short and of a bright, clear complexion, the authorities of Nevers complained that a child had been sent to be Superioress of the house. Every one asked her age, how long she had been professed, with a thousand other queries more or less disrespectful both to herself and to her Order. The ridicule heaped upon the Visitation in 1612 at Annecy and in 1619 at Paris was now repeated at Nevers. The community had no novices, no confessor, no regular daily Mass, and no means of subsistence. They were in want of everything excepting fervor, energy, and magnanimity, qualities that never failed in the heroic first days of the Visitation.

Let us relate one instance, for it deserves a place here. Mother Paul-Hiéronyme had taken with her from Moulins the ten thousand livres donated by Madame du Tertre for the new foundation; but when that lady saw that Mother de Bréchard was not to go to Nevers, she determined to remain with her, and began to negotiate for the return of her donation. The lawyers decided that her claim was unfounded; the benefactors and friends of the convent insisted that no attention should be paid to her request; and it was the general opinion that, were the matter carried to law, the Sisters would gain the suit. Their counsellors, influenced by the number and respectability of their advisers, were inclined to apply to the tribunals for a decision. But Mother Paul-Hiéronyme, animated by the true religious spirit, knelt down before the Sisters, and entreated them with tears to return the money, and to trust in God. They did so, but the convent was ruined. Their want, already great, became extreme. But, "if they had not yielded," said the young Superioress, "they would certainly have been obliged to carry me from the community room to the grave; for I never could have survived the grief of seeing our holy Founder's intentions disregarded." The spirit of St. Francis de Sales was beginning to fall upon his children, and to reveal itself by actions the Father would not have disavowed.

Whilst, from Annecy, the holy Bishop was himself directing the two foundations of Montferrand and Nevers, St. Chantal, in Paris, was preparing that of Orléans. The proposal for this foundation had come from the Countess de Saint-Pol, of the illustrious family of Longueville, whose husband was the Governor of Orléans.

In 1619 St. Francis de Sales passed nearly a month in that city, where he roused such enthusiasm that, when he appeared on the street, he had to be attended by halberdiers to keep off the crowd. The Countess de Saint-Pol had the honor of entertaining him several times, and it was on one of those occasions that she petitioned him to send some Sisters of his Institute to Orléans. The saint replied: "Yes, yes, Madame. Since you wish it, you shall have our daughters in your beautiful city of Orléans." Encouraged by these words, the Countess commenced the undertaking, but at the very outset unforeseen difficulties arose. No one in Orléans wanted the new religious: neither the Bishop, nor the city authorities, nor the people. There were already so many convents in the province that another appeared unnecessary. Fortunately, one of Madame de Saint-Pol's qualities was a holy boldness which, in this instance, Heaven blessed. Without waiting for the removal of a single obstacle, sure that God would sanction her project, she wrote to St. Francis de Sales to appoint Sisters and send them to Paris, whence she would have them conducted to Orléans. The saint made choice of Mother Claude-Agnès de la Roche, who had never yet made a foundation, and whom he had been reserving for some more than ordinary undertaking, and gave her as companion Sister Anne-Marguerite Clément, whom they still called "the grand novice," and who later became so noted for the divine light that flooded her soul. Mother Claude-Agnès headed a little colony of Sisters, some of whom were to be left in Moulins, some in Nevers, some in Paris, the rest being destined for Orléans. When on the point of starting from Annecy, St. Francis de Sales went to the convent to bid them good-bye. Before giving his parting blessing, he delivered to them his admirable conference on *Hope*, "which Mother de la Roche noted down, as she had done most of his other conferences."[1] When, at last, the hour of parting came, the saint could not tear himself away from his daughters. He ascended a hill, followed them with his eyes as far as he could, and when the carriages had disappeared, sent them his heart in a last blessing.[1]

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[1] *Annales manuscrites de la Visitation d'Orléans.* We gladly make the following remarks: From the above-named "*Annales*" we discover that it is to Mother de la Roche we owe the "*Conferences of St. Francis de Sales.*" We knew, indeed, that the saint never wrote them, that they were written from memory by one of the nuns. We now know that it was Mother de la Roche who zealously noted down those charming explanations of the religious virtues.

The Countess de Saint-Pol, meanwhile, was not idle. Her husband being Governor of Orléans, she obtained through his influence the consent of the municipality. As for the Bishop of Orléans, she went herself to Paris to see him, showed him the necessity of the work, explained the difference between the new Order and those already existing in his diocese, and laid before him the means collected for the foundation. As he still hesitated, she frankly assured him that she would not give him a moment's peace until he had signed the permission she demanded. He yielded at last, though protesting that he would have refused any other than herself. The Countess returned to the convent in triumph, hurried the preparations for departure, and started next morning with the Sisters for Orléans. They travelled in haste, in order to begin their enterprise whilst the Duke de Saint-Pol was there to protect them. But his presence was of little avail. Mother Claude-Agnès de la Roche arrived in Orléans September 19, 1620, and despite the influence in her favor, was very badly received. The Vicars-General and the officials of the diocese, not aware that Bishop de l'Aubespine had authorized the undertaking, refused to bless the house or establish canonical inclosure. They would scarcely permit Mass to be said in the house, even very privately and with closed doors; but as it was a holiday in the city, the feast of St. Euverte, Bishop of Orléans, they reluctantly granted consent. One ecclesiastic even asked the Sisters of what use they would be. "You occupy the place," he said, "of some good merchant who would labor for the city and take his turn in mounting guard." "Judging from your dress, sir," was Mother de la Roche's witty reply, "I presume you allude to guard over the heart. I assure you there is not a single one of our Sisters who does not keep constant watch and guard over her senses, to prevent the fortress of her soul from being taken by surprise. As to labor, if you will do us the favor to supply us with some of your work, you will see that we are no sluggards." These words spread rapidly through the city, and public opinion soon changed. The Count de Saint-Pol interfered, and the Vicars-General were obliged to celebrate a solemn High Mass at the convent, though they would not allow the *Te Deum* to be sung, alleging that it was not yet time for thanks, since nothing had been done. They had celebrated Mass merely to satisfy the Governor, they said, and they ordered the Superioress and all the Sisters to follow them to an upper room to receive their blessing. There they put numerous questions, which Mother de la Roche answered with her characteristic wit and judgment. When, at last, they required the Sisters to swear obedience to the Bishop of Orléans, she replied: "Nothing could be more agreeable to us, since we are dependent on the Bishops; therefore we promise obedience to His Lordship in all things conformable to our Rules, Constitutions, and Customs." "But why these reservations?" asked the Vicars. "Because," she answered, "we can promise to man nothing contrary to what we owe to God. Our first obligation is to observe our Rules, which are so dear to us that we would rather die than infringe them." "May God bless you, then," was the reply, "and in the name of our Bishop we receive you to observe in this city those dear Rules that you have so much at heart."

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[1] *Annales manuscrites de la Visitation d'Orléans.*

Such was the beginning of the convent of the Visitation at Orléans. Its history corresponds to its commencement. The Sisters did not die of hunger, though several times, in 1620 and 1621, they experienced extreme poverty. Some of Mother de la Roche's letters reveal the distress to which the convent was at times reduced.[1]

To these three foundations we shall add that of Valence, made on June 10, 1621. The good Sister Marie de Valence, who started the enterprise, shed upon the new house something of the peace that inundated her own beautiful soul. There were no obstacles to remove, no opposition to silence. Sister Marie de Valence wished the establishment, and that was enough for the pious inhabitants of Dauphiny, in whose eyes Marie was an angel. She had paid a visit to Grenoble, had seen Mother de Châtel at the head of her fervent community, and on her return, her simple wish to have a similar convent in Valence met with the heartiest concurrence. All hastened to offer assistance. Some brought money, others asked or granted the necessary permissions, and, on June 10, 1621, a band of Visitandines from Annecy entered Valence attended by an immense concourse, and were solemnly installed in their convent. Of all the foundations of the Visitation hitherto mentioned, this one appears to have been least subjected to the trials of opposition and the hardships of poverty.[1]

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[1] *Fondation inédite du neuvième Monastère de la Visitation en la Ville d'Orléans*, p. 160.

Now that the house of Paris was firmly established and favorable openings for other foundations were daily presenting themselves, especially in Dijon, Belley, and Saint-Étienne-en-Forez, St. Francis de Sales thought it time for Mother de Chantal to leave the capital, her presence being no longer necessary, and return to Annecy, where her absence was sensibly felt. He wrote to her, therefore, to take some Sisters and visit Orléans, Bourges, and Nevers, in order to see the state of the convents, make a foundation in Dijon, and then come as quickly as possible to Savoy. As soon as this news spread through Paris, many distinguished persons wrote to the Bishop, entreating him to leave Mother de Chantal with them a while longer. St. Francis de Sales was inflexible, though couching his refusal in graceful terms. "If God had ordained that Mother de Chantal, all who love her in Paris, and I myself could remain together,—oh, how sweet it would be! But how could that be? Our mountains would spoil Paris, if they were there; and Paris would starve our valleys, were it in their midst. It is only in eternity that we shall all be together." And he repeated his order for Mother de Chantal to join him at Annecy.

Our saint desired this meeting not less than he; but circumstances delayed her departure until the beginning of

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[1] *Fondation du dixième Monastère de la Visitation, établi en la Ville de Valence,* p. 165.

1622. Before leaving, she had the Annual Visit made by St. Vincent de Paul, who edified the Sisters as much as he was edified by them. He was particularly pleased, he said, with the spirit of devotion, mortification, and cordial union that reigned among them. As the time of Mother de Chantal's superiority had nearly expired, she resigned her authority into his hands, and the Sisters canonically elected for Superioress Mother Anne-Catherine de Beaumont. She had accompanied our saint from Annecy, and during the past three years had been Assistant and Mistress of Novices. She was a person of great virtue, much firmness of character, and good common sense, qualities that won for her the reputation of being one of the most efficient Superioresses then in the Order. Mother de Chantal left the house in excellent condition. It was furnished and out of debt, with an income of two thousand three hundred and eighteen livres. The community numbered nineteen professed members and several good novices. On February 22d, Rolland, one of St. Francis de Sales' servants, who was to accompany them, reached Paris, and all had to nerve themselves for the dreaded separation.

Mother de Chantal's farewell words to the Sisters assembled in Chapter have been preserved. "I entreat you, my dearest children," she said to them, "be humble, little, and low in your own eyes, well pleased when others look upon you as such and treat you accordingly. Other Orders think highly of their own Institutes; each claims to be the greatest; but we ought to look upon ourselves as the least and last of all in the Church of God. . . . Remember, also, that obedience is the eldest daughter of humility; and, therefore, with all my heart I exhort you to practise it. In all things, my very dear daughters, obey God in your Superiors, obey God in the observance of your Rules, obey God by gently acquiescing to the events ordained by Providence. Remember these last words, I entreat you, my dearest children. If the children of the world hearken to those that fall from the lips of a dying parent, with much greater reason should we hearken to those addressed to us in religion. I am not dying, however," she added, observing the Sisters' emotion; "but would to God that the practice of these virtues would make me die and you, also, a death that will give us eternal life!"

She tried to continue her instruction on humility and obedience; but sobs interrupted her words. "My dear Sisters," she said to them, no longer venturing to call them children, "my departure must not afflict you so deeply. Say to God, 'Thou hast given her to us, we now restore her to Thee. She is Thine, O Lord. Make use of her here or there, wherever it may please Thee; and if it be Thy will to do so at the farthest end of the world, and if Thou dost ask us to carry her thither ourselves, we will do so willingly.' Yes, Sisters, we must be ready for that and to add: 'O my God, we give her back to Thee! If it shall please Thee to restore her to us, may Thy holy name be blessed!' Adieu, then, my dear children! I conjure you to continue little, humble, and lowly, loving contempt, mortification, self-abasement, and all that can lower you in the esteem of men. What! God, who is so great, became so little for love of us, and we, who are His handmaids, do not wish to imitate His lowliness? My dear Saviour, I commend to Thee these souls that Thou hast committed to my charge, and I most humbly beg Thy divine majesty to pardon the bad example I have given them. I supplicate you, dear Sisters, to forgive me and to pray for my amendment. Lord, they are Thine. Bless them with Thy eternal benediction. I remit them into Thy hands. Guide them, O my God, in the ways of Thy providence. Make them very obedient to Thy good pleasure, to their Rules and Constitutions, and to the injunctions of Superiors. Render them very pliant and condescending to their equals and inferiors, and very eager for contempt. Grant, my dear Saviour, that in all that they do they may seek to annihilate self, in order to glorify Thee. Yes, my very dear daughters, believe me, God wishes to draw His glory from your lowliness. Your glory is to have no glory; your greatness is to have no greatness. Try to be very humble in your own eyes, as well as in the esteem of the world. Holy Virgin, Mother of my Saviour and Master, these children are thine. Take them under thy protection, present them to thy dear Son, watch over their hearts, that they may be agreeable to Him. Adieu, my dear daughters, I leave you without leaving you. From my heart I give you my blessing, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."[1]

The venerable Mother then embraced the Sisters, who were all in tears. "Relieve your heart, relieve your heart," she said to them, "but remain steadfast in the arms of God, and conformed to His good pleasure." The whole community accompanied her to the door, where two carriages were awaiting her. She took with her as travelling companion the young Sister Gasparde-Davise, whom St. Francis de Sales had recently sent her from Annecy, and four of the most richly dowered Sisters from Paris. The latter were destined for the convents of Bourges and Nevers, which were then very poor.

On leaving Paris, Mother de Chantal went first to Maubuisson, in compliance with a promise she had made to visit the young Abbess of Port-Royal. Mother Angélique and her community received her with expressions of joy. She remained with them four days, spoke to all in private as well as in general, and encouraged them to pursue courageously the difficult work of reform. Looking upon her as a saint, they changed her napkins at every meal, to preserve them as relics, and steeped linen in her blood for the same purpose, the venerable Mother having been bled whilst at their convent.

Maubuisson is only a very short distance from Pontoise, where the tomb of Blessed Marie de l'Incarnation, then dead about four years, was already attracting many pilgrims. St. Chantal had never known this great servant of God, though she had often heard St. Francis de Sales speak of her. His words aroused her admiration for the humility and purity of conscience of this privileged soul. Being so near her tomb, she wished to make a pilgrimage to it. The Carmelites, as she wrote, received her so cordially that she thought herself in a house of Holy Mary; and the good religious of Pontoise, on their side, declared that they felt as if they had their sainted Mother Teresa in their midst.

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[1] M. de Maupas (*Vie de la Mère de Chantal*, 4to, p. 188) gives this farewell exhortation of St. Chantal, but rearranged, scarcely recognizable, and far less touching. The broken words, proceeding from her emotion, appeared to him contrary to the rules of rhetoric, and he tried to improve them. He lost sight of the fact that his rhetoric diminished the sentiment. We have simply reproduced the original text from a contemporary manuscript.

To visit Pontoise, St. Chantal had to go a considerable distance out of her way; consequently she hastened her journey, and reached Orléans on March 3, 1622. She was impatiently awaited; for though sustained by Mother de la Roche's energy and virtue, the convent was undergoing extreme difficulties. The saint encouraged the Sisters to perseverance, taught them the value of suffering, particularly in the beginning of a work of this kind, and left them full of generous resolves and burning to sacrifice themselves for God. Here, as at Maubuisson, the Sisters collected as relics everything that belonged to her. They still preserve a napkin, a habit, and a veil used by the venerable servant of God. She visited, also, the most distinguished persons of the city, and began to give evidence of that wonderful ascendency over minds of which we shall hereafter see admirable instances. The Bishop of Orléans himself was completely won over. Two or three days after he had seen Mother de Chantal he went to the convent and humbly accused himself of having too long ignored the work of God. Before leaving Orléans, our saint accepted the invitation of the principal convents, for all wanted the happiness of listening to her holy conversation. At the Benedictine convent she spent a whole night in pious conferences with the nuns. All were eager to speak to her of their interior, and learn from her those true religious maxims upon which they desired to form their conduct.

From Orléans, Mother de Chantal went to Bourges. To difficulties resulting from poverty, difficulties common at that time to almost all the Visitation houses, there was added at Bourges another exceedingly rare, of which there was not, perhaps, a second instance in the early days of the Order. It was the government of an incapable, though saintly, Superioress, Mother Anne-Marie Rosset. In 1619, when St. Francis de Sales passed through Bourges, he had been struck at the fervor of the nuns and the incapacity of her who governed them. He hastened to notify Mother de Chantal of the fact. "To speak plainly," he wrote, "I have found poor little Mother Rosset so feeble in health, so delicate, that I think it necessary to relieve her of the burden. This pure dove is much better suited to remain with her Beloved in 'the hollow places of the wall,' in her own cell, than to converse with men. Every one admires her virtue, few approve her government." The two holy Founders had, in consequence, dispatched Mother Françoise-Gabrielle Bally to Bourges, with directions to assist and support Mother Rosset as far as possible. This step was as successful as half-measures usually are. Mother de Chantal had scarcely arrived before she understood the necessity of more vigorous action. She told Mother Rosset that she must renounce authority which she knew not how to exercise, and directed the Chapter to proceed to the election of another Superioress. The choice fell upon Mother Francoise-Gabrielle Bally. Mother Rosset was immediately sent with Sister Gasparde-Davise to Burgundy, to await, at Alonne Castle, the Countess de Toulongeon's residence, Mother de Chantal's arrival. Under these mortifying circumstances, Mother Rosset never once belied her high reputation for virtue. She said not a word, gave not a sign indicative of the least displeasure. She experienced but one moment's sadness, and that was, not when called upon to resign her power, but when about to leave her dear Sisters of Bourges. And even then, when Mother de Chantal said in a quick, severe manner, such as she was accustomed to use toward courageous souls: "My daughter, put all that aside, and go to God," she instantly bowed her head, and prepared to set out for Alonne.[1]

St. Chantal herself started for Nevers, leaving the community of Bourges in a very fervent condition, with an excellent Superioress, twenty-five professed Sisters, some good novices, and their poverty diminished;[2] for, as we have said, she had bestowed upon them two very rich novices from Paris.

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[1] *Vies des plusieurs Supérieures de l'Ordre de la Visitation.* Annecy, 1683, 4to, p. 10.

[2] *Histoire manuscrite de la Visitation de Bourges.—Vie de la Mère Anne-Marie Rosset.*

The Visitandines of Nevers were impatiently awaiting their venerable Foundress, for they were suffering more keenly than any other of the foundations. Poverty, neglect, want of novices, contempt, and persecution even from persons like themselves consecrated to the service of God, —nothing was wanting to their thorny crown. St. Chantal stopped with them a few days, encouraged them, and repeated in her energetic language what St. Francis de Sales often wrote to them in his own gracious style:—not to be discouraged, to fear neither raillery nor calumny, to bear all silently, that, in truth, the religious who were mocking at them were greater than they; but in heaven did the seraphim despise the angels? Their institute was, indeed, very little, and just for that did the devil hate it, because that proud spirit hates lowliness which fosters humility; it was very poor, but Jesus Christ was born in a stable and died on a cross; they should, therefore, have courage and trust in God. She then visited some of the notables of the city, and by virtue of her own great reputation gained favor for the poor community. The care of following up the good impression made by her efforts, she left to the piety and ability of Mother Paul-Hiéronyme de Monthouz.

From Nevers, our saint proceeded to Moulins, where only a short stay was necessary, the convent being in a flourishing condition under Mother de Bréchard's government. Thence she repaired to Alonne to meet the Sisters whom St. Francis de Sales was to send for a foundation in Dijon.[1]

God loves the humble. He had just given a proof of this at Alonne. Good Sister Anne-Marie Rosset, who had been so deeply humiliated in Bourges, had scarcely reached Alonne before God showered upon her His most extraordinary favors. One day, in particular, whilst at prayer in the chapel, she was suddenly rapt in ecstasy and raised to a considerable height above the floor. Madame de Toulongeon happened to be in the chapel at the time and, after gazing at her in wonder, she ran to summon the whole household. The family, the servants, all flocked to see the prodigy. There was time sufficient to gratify their curiosity, for

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[1] **Letter of April 23, 1622.**

Sister Anne-Marie remained suspended in the air two whole hours.[1]

No words can express Madame de Toulongeon's joy on seeing her mother. She advanced on her knees to meet her, for she already beheld the saint in her, and loaded her with caresses. Mother de Chantal tarried but a short time at Alonne. The Sisters from Annecy soon arrived, and she set out in haste for Dijon.

Dijon was her birthplace. There she had been initiated by Baptism and a Christian education into the knowledge and love of Jesus Christ; there, after her husband's death, she had commenced a life of greater recollection and more intimate union with God; there she had met the Bishop of Geneva, felt the first inspiration to her high vocation, engraved upon her breast the holy name of Jesus, and astonished the world by the heroism of her sacrifices. It was thence she had started to fulfil the word of the Master: "Every one that hath left brethren or sisters or father or mother or wife or children for My name's sake, shall receive a hundred-fold." [2]

And now that God had kept His promise, now that Sisters and spiritual children were flocking around her, might she not lawfully hasten back to her country, there to establish a house of her Order? For ten years she had been cherishing the thought and daily begging God for its realization; but for ten years the Parliament of Dijon had opposed the project. Either from dislike for President Frémyot, whose noble conduct toward Henry IV. they had never pardoned, or from other motives, the municipality would not consent to the establishment of a Visitation convent. In vain had President Odebert, so celebrated in Dijon for his boundless charity, made repeated efforts to remove the prejudices of his associates; in vain had he, on the occasion of the sudden death of several of the magistrates most obstinately opposed to the foundation, exclaimed in full Parliament: "It is useless for man to oppose God. When

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[1] *Vies des premières Supérieures. La Mère Anne-Marie Rosset*, p. 20.

[2] Matt. xix. 29.

He wishes a work, He changes obstacles into means. The sudden deaths we are now deploring proclaim it plainly enough." The Parliament remained inflexible.

It was decreed by God that two poor girls, without nobility or wealth, should accomplish, in spite of the Parliament, what the latter should have considered an honor to effect. Marie Bertot was an humble and pious girl whom Almighty God had already used as the instrument for the establishment of the Ursulines in Dijon. Her zeal was now directed toward introducing the Visitandines, and she communicated her project to one of her relatives, Claire Parise, the daughter of one of the procurators of the Parliament. Claire was as pious and almost as poor as herself; but both, with the simple confidence of youth, or rather with the unshaken confidence of faith, decided that the new convent must be founded.

Repulsed by the Parliament, they set out for Paris, gained admittance to Louis XIII., and obtained from him letters patent for the erection of the convent. The Parliament, vexed at these proceedings and to elude the registration of the letters patent, referred the petitioners to the King's officers, who, in their turn, sent them to the Mayor and Councilmen of the city. These gentlemen, animated by the same spirit of opposition, resolved that, before proceeding farther, the two young girls should give security to the amount of forty thousand livres. The poor girls had but their needle for their support, and this their opponents well knew. Such a condition would, they hoped, bury the affair with due honor to the royal patent. But the humble girls, whose faith had opened for them the way to the King, nothing daunted, engaged to pay in a very short time the forty thousand livres. They counted upon God, and God did not fail them. A holy lady, the widow of President Le Grand, came to their assistance. "What!" she exclaimed, when told of the conditions imposed, "can God find in this city no one to go security? Ah, well! I'll do it!"

This opposition, whilst delaying St. Chantal's arrival, only rendered it the more eagerly expected. Her coming was a brilliant triumph. The whole population crowded out to meet her. The merchants and tradesmen closed their shops, and such were the acclamations along the streets that, as St. Chantal herself said: "The Sisters neither heard nor felt the carriage moving. It seemed as if the good people were carrying it in their arms. It took a long time to make a little headway, for it was impossible to pass through the crowd." This was the first of the many solemn ovations given our illustrious saint, and it was but proper that it should be decreed her by her own city.

On entering the small house rented by Marie Bertot and Claire Parise for the commencement of the foundation, Mother de Chantal exclaimed: "This new convent is destined to honor the hidden life of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph in the house of Nazareth," words that reveal her thoughts during the ovation. That evening, after she had received the municipal authorities, "there came a simple-minded party consisting of two hundred villagers from the environs of Dijon, to bid her welcome. She was so pleased with their simplicity that she made all the Sisters go into a large court and raise their veils, thus to receive the new visitors more cordially. She treated the good people most affectionately, and after exhorting them to fear God and gain heaven by laboring on earth, she dismissed them, not, however, without her blessing, for they knelt down and refused to rise until she had given it."[1]

Next day the house was blessed by M. l'Abbé Fyot, the Vicar-General of His Lordship Sebastian Zamet, Bishop of Langres, to which diocese Dijon then belonged. St. Chantal had taken with her six Sisters as foundation-stones; but Burgundy was not slow in supplying new members. The first to come was Claire Parise, who had so generously labored for the erection of the convent. St. Chantal thought so highly of her that she told the Mistress of Novices not to spare her, as she was capable of the greatest sacrifices. Her friend, Marie Bertot, did not accompany her to the Visitation. Two months later she followed the inspiration of God, and founded at Saint-Jean-de-Losne a hospital for the poor, where she herself died a holy death. This hospital is still in existence. The second novice who received the veil from St. Chantal's hands was the venerable widow of President Le Grand. She was seventy-four years old, but her heart was young and fervent. Nothing was lowly or humble enough for her, and days passed without humiliation or suffering were so painful to her that she used to complain lovingly to God: "Ah! my God, what have I done that Thou hast not visited me to-day?" To gratify her yearning for humiliations, they had given her the care of the garden, where she passed the whole day, weeding and gathering the vegetables, which she carried to the Lay-Sisters with charming simplicity. Bishop Zamet, distressed at seeing a lady of her rank employed in such labor, asked her one day whether it did not fatigue her. "O my Lord," was the answer, "when I see Mother de Chantal engaged in the lowest duties, nothing costs me."

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[1] *Mémoires* of Mother de Chaugy, part ii. chap. xiii.

The convent door was soon after opened to a young lady of birth not less illustrious, Mademoiselle Jeanne-Marguerite de Berbisey, a relative of St. Chantal. She was twenty-four years old, of noble name, large fortune, and with prospects of a brilliant future. She resigned all to God. It was of her that St. Chantal uttered the beautiful eulogium, "We have a postulant who is a pearl of virtue."

Thus at Dijon, as in Paris, Moulins, Grenoble, and Annecy, were found vocations with the same characteristics:—the world in its most seductive form trodden under foot, the most imperious claims of nature subdued; sacrifice leading the way to the cloister; and, in these poor communities, marvels of devotedness, humility, and abnegation, souls practising sublime virtues and rising to the highest degree of union with God.

St. Chantal had been in Dijon about six months, when she received a letter from St. Francis de Sales telling her that he was going to Avignon in the suite of the Duke of Savoy. He desired her to meet him in Lyons, where he intended to remain some time on his return. Mother de Chantal made immediate preparations to depart. She had already received twelve novices, purchased and paid in part for a large and beautiful house, furnished it, built the church, choir, and sacristy, and commenced the parlors. She had done all this with the assistance of Divine Providence alone. Her daughter, Madame de Toulongeon, had offered her a sum of money to begin the undertaking, but she refused it. She entered Dijon with only fourteen livres saved from her travelling expenses. Before leaving, she sent to Montferrand for Mother Favre, to whom she confided the new convent, and, with no anxiety for its future, started for Lyons, October 28, 1622.[1]

Eleven days later, November 9th, St. Francis de Sales left Annecy, which he was never again to see. He had a strong presentiment of his approaching end. On the morning of his departure, he said Mass at the Visitation, and gave a short conference on his favorite maxim, *Ask for nothing, refuse nothing*, but remain submissive and abandoned to God. When leaving, he said: "Adieu, my daughters, until eternity." "My Lord," exclaimed the Sisters in tears, "may God bring you back soon!" "And if it should please Him not to bring me back," replied the saint, "would He be less lovable?" On leaving the house, he found Sister Anne-Jacqueline Coste kneeling at the threshold weeping. "My child," he said to her, "I have made other journeys, but I never before saw you cry at my departure. Why so many tears to-day?" "Ah! my Lord," she answered, "my heart tells me that this journey is to be your last, and that we shall see you no more." "And *my* heart tells *me*," returned St. Francis de Sales, foreseeing Sister Coste's own approaching death, "that even if *I should not return, we shall see each other again sooner than you think*."

From Annecy the saint went to Belley, whither two months before, August 22, 1622, he had sent Mother Marie-Madeleine de Mouxy and five Sisters to found the thirteenth convent of the Order. During the four or five days of his stay, the saint went every morning to say his Mass in the little chapel of the Visitation. The first day, whilst at the altar, he appeared, as it were, environed with light. "To all present he seemed to be in Paradise." After Mass, he entered the convent, which was very small, and remarked that he was charmed to see his doves in lowliness so strict and so entire. Another time, as he was leaving the chapel, he met Madame des Roys with one of her little daughters by the hand, a child about five or six years old. The Bishop went up to her, caressed the child, calling her by name, although he had never before seen her. As the mother appeared astonished, he said to her, whilst making a cross on the little girl's forehead and kissing her on the sign, "Do you know what I am doing? I am marking little Marie for a daughter of the Visitation." The saint's words were fulfilled in a surprising manner.

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[1] *Annales du Monastère de la Visitation de Dijon*, p. 21.

But his short stay in Belley is memorable in the history of the Order for a still greater event. The first time he entered the convent, Sister Claude-Simplicienne burst into tears as soon as she saw him. The saint asking the cause of her grief, she answered: "Ah! my Lord, it is because you will die this year." The Bishop looked at her sweetly, and said with a joyous air: "What say you, my daughter Simplicienne, that I shall die this year?"

"Yes, my Lord," she replied; "but I entreat you to ask Our Lord and His holy Mother that it may not be."

"O my child," returned the servant of God, "do not ask that of me, for I cannot do it."

"But I will do it. I shall so importune Our Lord and the Blessed Virgin, that He will defer it some years."

"Take care how you do that, my dear daughter Simplicienne," said the saint in a tone almost supplicating. "Ah! my dear child, will you not be glad for me to go to rest? See, I am so worn out, so heavy, that I can scarcely creep along. Besides, what need have you of me? You have your Constitutions in which everything is so well laid down; and then, too, I leave you our Mother de Chantal. She is quite sufficient for you. And, after all, we must not put our trust in men, who are mortal, but in the living God."[1]

This conversation took place November 11, 1622. On December 28th of the same year the servant of God was no more!

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[1] *Fondation manuscrite du treizième Monastère de la Visitation en la Ville de Belley*, p. 174. De Chaugy: *Vies des premières Religieuses de la Visitation. La Sœur Marie-Simplicienne Fardel*, vol. ii. p. 36.

From Belley the saint went to Lyons, where he remained long enough only to go to the Visitation, say Mass there, and see Mother de Chantal for a few minutes. He directed her to visit the convents of Saint-Étienne and Montferrand, whilst he went to Avignon, promising her a longer interview on his return.

Between Lyons and Avignon there was at that time only one Visitation convent, that of Valence. On his way to Avignon, St. Francis de Sales stopped at it a few moments, and on his return made a longer visit. He dissuaded the Sisters from a lawsuit to which they had been advised, to obtain from one of their neighbors a garden they greatly needed. "My daughters," said St. Francis de Sales to the nuns, "wait until the good man wants to sell you his garden. He has more right to keep it than you to buy it." He also decided that the veil should be given to Madame de la Granelle, who, in spite of her eighty-four years, had been begging for admission into the novitiate, a happiness hitherto refused her.[1] "Why refuse?" asked the saint. "There is no age unworthy of being consecrated to God."

Before resuming his journey, he wished to visit the devout Sister Marie de Valence, so holy and so dear to the Visitation. As neither he nor his attendants knew where she lived, an Out-Sister went to show him the way. This good Sister had left some work that she was anxious to finish, so she ran on before the Bishop, walking so fast that he, worn out and feeble, almost at the term of his days, could not keep up with her. He called to her: "My daughter, let us go a little more slowly, if you please." The Sister slackened her pace for a moment, then forgetting herself, off she started again. The Bishop made no further remonstrance, but meekly hastened on, saying: "They who are being led must follow." When they reached the house, the good Out-Sister knelt down, and the saint blessed her three times, laying his hand upon her head with the remark: "You will one day wear the veil of the Order." His words were fulfilled.[2]

He then returned to Lyons. Although many distinguished personages solicited the honor of entertaining him, M. Olier, the Lieutenant of the Province, even offering him the half of his mansion, he preferred a little room in the house of the gardener of the Visitation. To the objection made on account of the inconveniences of such a lodging, he replied gaily that he thought it a great advantage to be near his daughters, and besides, he was never better off than when worse off.

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[1] Madame de la Granelle's age is given elsewhere in the Visitation annals as eighty-eight. (Translator's note.)

[2] *Fondation inédite de Valence,* p. 166.

As soon as St. Chantal was notified of his return, she, too, hastened to Lyons. She had paid a passing visit to the convent of Saint-Étienne, founded only a month before, and stopped a little longer at Montferrand, two years in existence, and which, founded by Mother Favre and edified by the eminent virtue of the Countess de Dalet, was in a very flourishing condition spiritually. She made there her annual retreat. During those days of retirement, her desire to see and confer with her holy director increased, for she had much to say to him about her own soul and the Institute.

St. Francis de Sales was not less desirous of an interview with her. But such was the number of princes and princesses eager for the honor of entertaining him, and the presence of the two courts of France and Savoy imposed upon him so many duties, that he had scarcely time to speak to her. As soon as he heard of her arrival, however, he took measures to secure a little leisure, and went to the convent parlor to see her. It was three years and a half since they last met, and God willed to grant them in this life only these few hours' conversation.

On entering the parlor, Mother de Chantal was struck at the change in the holy Bishop's appearance. He seemed altogether transfigured, and the brightness that had shone on his countenance for several years past, reflection of the divine fire consuming him, was sensibly increased. Was it that his saintly brow was even then reflecting a ray of the beatitude that so soon awaited him? Or was it rather that, after years of labor, he had attained that plenitude of the perfect man, that maturity of the soul in Christ, which God grants in its fulness to the greatest saints only at their last hour?

"Mother," said the Bishop, "we have some hours before us. Which of us shall speak first?"

"I, if you please, Father," answered St. Chantal eagerly; "my heart has great need of being scanned by you."

St. Francis de Sales, seeing this eagerness in one whom he wished wholly perfect, said gently, though gravely:

"What, Mother, are you still eager? Have you still a choice? I thought to find you quite angelic." And knowing that he had something more urgent to do than to occupy himself with a soul whom God Himself directed, he continued:

"Mother, we shall talk of ourselves at Annecy. Let us now finish the affairs of our little Congregation. Oh, how I love our little Institute, since in it God is loved so well!"

Without a word Mother de Chantal folded the papers containing conscience matters of the last three years, and, during four hours, the two great saints discussed together various points for the solid establishment of their Order. St. Francis de Sales insisted especially upon leaving each convent free, independent of the others, under the immediate government of the Bishop of the diocese and the Holy See. The more he prayed, the more did God manifest to him that this was His will, and that such an arrangement would be productive of more fervor and not less union and stability. "For remember," he said in conclusion, "our daughters are the daughters of the clergy, and the clergy form the first Order in religion."

The feeling of veneration St. Chantal experienced for St. Francis de Sales was so extraordinary that she could not terminate this long conversation without exclaiming almost involuntarily:

"Father, I doubt not that you will one day be canonized, and I hope to take part myself in your canonization."

"Mother," returned the saint in a very grave tone, "God could work that miracle; but they who are to negotiate my canonization are not yet born."

These were their last words. They were to meet again only in the glory of eternity. Early next morning St. Chantal left Lyons for Annecy, and about fifteen days later St. Francis de Sales was struck with apoplexy.

Those fifteen days, the consolation of which God refused to Mother de Chantal, brilliantly portrayed the saintly Bishop's increasing transformation and his love for his dear children of the Visitation. On Christmas day he went to say Mass for them. He appeared at the altar like a seraph, his countenance so resplendent that the Superioress, Mother de Blonay, ventured to question him at the little grate of the sacristy. "My Lord," she said, "it seemed to me that I saw the angel Gabriel at your side when you intoned the *Gloria in Excelsis*." "My dear daughter," replied the saint, looking at her graciously, "the hearing of my heart is very dull to inspirations, and I need the angels to speak to my corporal ears and strike my senses with a holy melody."

This evasive answer did not satisfy Mother de Blonay. She insisted, and the man of God continued :

"It is true that I was never more consoled at the altar. The Divine Infant was there visibly and invisibly. Why should not the angels have been there ? But you shall know nothing more, there are too many around."

Next morning, the day before the eve of his death, he again said Mass at the Visitation, and late in the evening had all the Sisters called to the parlor, where he spoke to them with extraordinary effusion of soul upon the admirable maxim he had explained to the sisters of Annecy on leaving them : "Ask for nothing, refuse nothing, in imitation of the Infant Jesus in His crib." He had been speaking three whole hours, when his attendants, whom he had directed to come for him at eight o'clock, entered the parlor with lighted torches. The saint was surprised to see them so soon, saying that he could have spent the night conversing upon holy things with his dear daughters; however, to imitate the Saviour of whom he had just been speaking, and to practise obedience to inferiors, he arose and bade the Sisters adieu, assuring them that he bore them all in his heart.

He said Mass for them again on the 27th, and gave them Holy Communion. Mother de Blonay begged him to hear her confession, and thus had the happiness of being the last penitent who received absolution from this great director of souls. That very day, about two o'clock in the afternoon, he was struck with apoplexy and paralysis, of which he died.

It would be difficult to imagine a more moving spectacle than that of the saint stretched upon his bed of suffering, enduring intense pain, but gentle and, if we may say so, gracious toward death as he had been during life toward all the world. Paralyzed in every limb and sunk in deep lethargy, the name of Jesus was more effectual in arousing him than the red-hot irons vainly applied by the physicians, and his love for God burst forth from time to time in tenderest accents. His agony lasted thirty hours, but the serenity of his countenance never changed. It was even remarked that the radiance which illumined it during the last few years was visibly increased, to the intense admiration of the awe-stricken assistants. When the end drew nigh, all knelt down around his bed, to recite the prayers for the agonizing. At the words: *Omnes sancti Innocentes, orate pro eo,* "All ye holy innocents, pray for him," his beautiful soul escaped from his body, and "this innocent prisoner flew to eternal liberty."[1] It was the feast of Holy Innocents, a Thursday, at seven o'clock in the evening, the saint being in his fifty-sixth year.

The same day and hour Mother de Chantal was kneeling in the chapel of the Visitation of Grenoble, offering her blessed Father to God, when she distinctly heard a voice saying: "He is no more!" Still under the influence of the transformation she had lately observed in him, and thinking not of his death, she exclaimed: "My God, he is no more, he lives no more. It is Thou who dost exist and live in him!" She dwelt long and enthusiastically upon this thought. For a moment, it is true, the idea of his death flashed on her mind; but she paid no heed to it, and cheerfully left Grenoble for the convent of Belley.

It was there she heard the sorrowful news. M. Michel Favre, confessor to St. Francis de Sales, her own, also, since he was confessor to the community of Annecy, thought proper to break the sad tidings to her without delay. "Mother," he said, "we must will what God wills. Be so kind as to read this letter." At these words her heart beat violently; but she promptly turned to God, accepting in advance whatever painful news it might contain. Even before reading it, she understood the words, "He is no more." Her tears commenced to flow, and she wept without ceasing until after Holy Communion next morning, but very calmly, with entire submission to God's will and the positive certainty of the glory of her blessed Father.

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[1] *Fondation inédite de Lyon*, p. 64.

A religious having come to visit her, found her weeping. He remarked that perfect resignation dries up tears, to which she replied: "O Father, if I knew they were displeasing to God, I would not shed a single one!" From that moment, with the energy of will that characterized her, she restrained her tears; but the effort caused her great pain. M. Favre had to interfere, and placing before her eyes the picture of Jesus weeping over Lazarus, he commanded her to give free vent to her grief.

She went to recreation that evening with the Sisters, though unable to utter a word. When it was over she withdrew, had a chapter of the *Following of Christ* read to her, and then retired, wishing to be alone with Our Lord, to weep undisturbed, and seek consolation from Him. But the Superioress told Sister Claude-Simplicienne not to leave her. The good Sister passed the night kneeling at her bedside, talking to her about their blessed Father, relating the last conversation she had with him, and her own prediction of his death when he passed through Belley. Early next morning the saint started for Annecy, whither she hastened to see and console the Sisters and prepare a worthy burial for the deceased prelate.

Meanwhile, at Lyons, the small apartment in which St. Francis de Sales lay dead was invaded by the public. They came in crowds to kiss his feet, and to steep pictures, handkerchiefs, and rosaries in his blood. On all sides was heard the determination not to give up the precious remains. Since God, they said, had permitted the great Bishop to die in Lyons, Lyons ought to possess his tomb. Alarmed at these rumors, which daily gained strength, the faithful Rolland and the members of the episcopal suite hastened preparations for departure. The holy body was already on a litter, which was to be borne by mules, when M. Olier, the Lord Lieutenant of the province, suddenly opposed the departure.

We may judge of Mother de Chantal's feelings on hearing this news. She had already written in energetic terms to Mother de Blonay, Superioress of Lyons, entreating her to use every effort to procure the speedy return to Annecy of the precious remains. For the first time in her life she closed her letter with the words: "I beg this of you, and, if I dare, I command it." She hastened to write to the Duke of Savoy, to the Mayor and Syndics of Annecy. She sent for the Administrator of the diocese and the Dean of the Chapter, showed them the saint's formal and irrevocable will and testament, and prevailed upon them to set out at once for Lyons. In a word, she continued her efforts until M. Olier's prohibition was removed, and the holy remains restored to Savoy.

The journey was a triumph. The saintly Bishop's remains were everywhere hailed with demonstrations of respect amounting to veneration. After receiving marks of honor in all the churches along the route and particularly in Annecy, they were borne to the chapel of the Visitation, where St. Chantal and her daughters received them with indescribable emotion. The coffin was placed in the sanctuary, close to the choir grate, and covered, not with a mortuary pall, but with a white veil upon which were embroidered in gold the holy names of Jesus and Mary.

In their last interview, St. Francis de Sales had told Mother de Chantal that she should give him an account of her interior at Annecy. Wishing to obey him in death as faithfully as she had done during his life, she knelt down before the coffin and laid open her soul to her blessed Father. God alone knows what passed in that sublime communication, or by what ineffable consolation the holy Bishop proved to Mother de Chantal that she had been heard. But when she again appeared in the midst of the Sisters they remarked that she was radiant and like one transfigured.

CHAPTER IV.

MOTHER DE CHANTAL, LEFT ALONE AT THE HEAD OF THE VISITATION ORDER, PROVES HERSELF WORTHY OF THE HIGH MISSION.—DEFINITIVE ORGANIZATION OF THE INSTITUTE.

1623-1624.

Mother de Chantal was fully conscious of the heavy responsibility imposed upon her by St. Francis de Sales' death; but, relying upon God's assistance and trusting to the protection of her holy director, whom she believed a saint and already in heaven, she decided upon the course to pursue, and formed her plans with characteristic clearness and firmness. To continue the work commenced by him, to defend it against enemies from without, to protect it against others still more dangerous from within, to enforce respect for the Rules, to develop in it the spirit of mildness and firmness, and to prevent its decay by a too rapid propagation,—upon all this she resolved as soon as she learned the death of St. Francis de Sales.

"Live Jesus!" she wrote some days after to Mother de Chastelluz. "May this sacred name be praised in our tribulations, that the greatness of our sorrows may be a sweet perfume before the Divine Majesty! My daughter, how great and heavy the blow, but how sweet and paternal the hand that dealt it! Therefore I kiss that hand and love it with all my heart, bowing my head and bending my whole soul to His most holy will, which I adore and reverence with all my strength. I have no other wish on earth than to see our convents in the perfect, entire, and loving observance of the directions left us by our blessed and holy Father. We must embrace it, my dear daughter, and lead all our dear Sisters to the same, but gently, sweetly; for, above all, this spirit of suavity must shine amongst us."

Such was the end Mother de Chantal had in view. In the remaining pages of this history we shall see by what wise and solid plans, by what energetic means, and, above all, by what admirable virtues she realized her purpose.

There was still much to be done. True, the general lines of the Institute were drawn up, the Rules and Constitutions written; but a thousand details remained to be defined. The consequence was, in each convent arose a variety of customs, which would have ultimately compromised the unity of the Institute. It was also true that it appeared to be solidly founded, since it already numbered thirteen houses; but, with the exception of three or four, those houses—poor, scarce of members, and not yet firmly established—might, if suddenly deprived of the energetic guidance that had hitherto sustained them, come to naught. Again, it was true that many other foundations were on the point of being made, that over twenty cities were asking for the "Daughters of Holy Mary."[1] But just here lay a new danger, that of weakening the Order by allowing it to propagate too soon and too rapidly. Fortunately, God, who had endowed Mother de Chantal with intelligence, good sense, and energy, to which rare gifts were added experience and high sanctity, granted her nineteen years of beautiful and vigorous old age, time more than sufficient for a woman of her capacity to ward off perils and put the seal of perfection upon the young Institute.

Those nineteen years, so useful to the Order, were equally fruitful in glory for our saint. So far, she had acted only by the orders and under the direction of St. Francis de Sales. Withdrawing from notice as far as she could, that the holy Bishop alone might appear, she had had no opportunity to show forth in all their brilliancy the rare talents she had received from God. Alone thenceforth at the head of her thirteen houses, which she was to increase to eighty, we shall see her displaying all the qualities that make Founders of Religious Orders. We shall see her uniting, more than ever before, mildness with firmness, zeal with patience, vivacity and keen penetration with vigor of execution, a mind full of resources to the surest tact in the management of souls. We shall see her rousing unanimous applause, less by her extraordinary qualities than by her sublime virtues. We shall behold her receiving ovation after ovation, but always humble amid her triumphs, stronger and more magnanimous than ever, daily increasing in grace and merit; we shall behold her entering a third phase of her existence, and, after having charmed the world by her youth and astonished it by the energy of her womanhood, we shall see her winning it and commanding its enthusiastic applause by the fecundity of her old age.

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[1] "*Les Filles de Sainte-Marie,*" as the Visitandines were sometimes called.

The first months after her return to Annecy were employed in preparing a tomb worthy of the sacred relics of her saintly director, in collecting and arranging his papers, letters, sermons, unpublished works, and everything calculated to make him better known, and which, perhaps, at some future day might be useful at his canonization. These duties occupied her until May, the period she had fixed for a step full of deep significance for the whole Order.

Ascension Day fell that year on the 25th of May. According to the Rules of the Visitation, on the Saturday after this feast the Superioresses who have been in office three years solemnly give up their authority, retire to the lowest place in the community, there to await, in the practice of obedience, the result of the election prescribed for the following Thursday. Hitherto St. Francis de Sales had never allowed Mother de Chantal to conform to this Rule. From the very beginning of the Order she had always been invested with authority, having been re-elected every three years, without even a temporary release. Had she listened to human prudence, she might probably have hesitated before making a change in this arrangement. The times were critical, and, immediately after the death of the Founder, it seemed imperatively necessary that the authority, indispensable in the commencement of any enterprise, should remain concentrated in the hands of the Foundress. But virtue is, at times, bold with a rashness that God blesses. After deep and mature reflection, Mother de Chantal resolved to submit to this point of the Rule as to all others. Consequently on the 27th of May, in presence of the community assembled in the chapel and before Provost de Sales, who presided in place of His Lordship, Jean-François de Sales, she knelt down and resigned her authority, conformably to the Constitutions of the Order. It was a thunderclap to the whole assembly. Neither the Provost nor the Sisters expected it. But she acted with such firmness and resoluteness that no one dared oppose her. Her resignation was accepted, and the government of the house placed in the hands of the Assistant. The election was to take place on the following Thursday—the first day of June. The Sisters had four days to prepare for retaliation. Mother de Chantal, as prescribed by the Rule, took the lowest rank.

"Our Sisters were more afflicted than I can say," wrote Mother de la Croix later on. "As for myself, my position of novice kept me silent. All I could do was to admire this blessed Mother, who was more humble than any one in the last rank had ever been. She performed the ceremonies with me in choir and refectory, took her seat amongst us on the last benches at recreation, knelt to receive the general admonitions given the Sisters, told her faults, asked her little permissions either to leave the room, to write, or to speak, as the necessity required, and kept her eyes lowered, except when forced to raise them, wishing to meddle in nothing, but only to obey. Once the portress brought her a package of letters addressed to her; but, as soon as she saw the word 'Superioress,' she drew back her hand, as if from the fire, saying that it must be taken to the Assistant then in charge of the government of the convent."[1]

On June 1st the community assembled in choir and unanimously elected Mother de Chantal *Superioress for life.* It was now our saint's turn to be amazed. She was not, however, disconcerted. She at once protested against the election as null, being contrary to the Rules and Constitutions of the Order; and declared that she would never perform any functions of superiority in quality of *Superioress*

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[1] *Procès de Canonisation.* Manuscript of Mother de la Croix, part ii. p. 510.

for life. In vain did the oldest Sisters affirm that they had heard their Founder himself say that he wished her to be the Superioress and Mother of the convent in Annecy as long as she lived. She positively refused, saying that, if the holy Bishop were alive, she would make known to him her reasons, and that he would approve her not accepting an election for life. They were obliged to submit, and re-elect her for three years only.

All these facts, omitted by Mother de Chaugy, incompletely and inaccurately related by M. de Maupas, the Abbé Marsollier, and others, and consigned to the keeping of several unpublished contemporary *Mémoires*, are told by Mother de Chantal herself in a letter that we have been so fortunate as to find, and in which her humility appears in too brilliant a light to allow us to withhold it from our readers. This letter, addressed to Mother de Blonay, runs as follows:

"I wish I had time to tell you the surprise I gave our Sisters when I resigned the superiority. I had said nothing to them about it, and they thought they were only to proceed to the election.[1] Never was seen such astonishment, such emotion.—But that did not deter me. I followed my Rule. Unknown to me, they held council among themselves, concluded that they had made a great mistake, and that at the election they would declare they did not accept my resignation, and elect me Superioress for life. Being ignorant of all this, I was surprised when the Superior announced it. I accepted the charge, not for life, but according to the Rule. I tried to convince them afterward of their fault; but they would not believe themselves in the wrong. On the contrary, they reproached themselves for not having opposed me on the spot. They urged that I was not like other Superioresses, that they looked upon me as this and that, and such like nonsense; that it was not His Lordship's intention for me to be deposed, but elected; that other convents would wish to elect me for Superioress, which they would never allow. In a word, had I been their Foundress or some other great personage, they could not have said more. I beg you to think over all this and tell me whether I have omitted anything I should have done on the occasion, to prevent its having a bad effect upon the other convents. I would not, for the world, injure our Institute."[1]

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[1] We see by this how the affair was conducted in St. Francis de Sales' lifetime. They re-elected Mother de Chantal every three years without deposing her.

After her election, Mother de Chantal, wishing that the coming three years should set their seal upon the Order, began at once a very difficult, but most important work for its definitive organization. St. Francis de Sales had not had time to finish his work. After his death were found among his papers innumerable writings and memoranda both in Latin and French, relating to the Visitation. They were notes upon certain customs, established by circumstances in Annecy, and which the saint wished to unite and arrange for general adoption; formulas of vows; a sketch of the ceremonial for receptions, professions, elections, and depositions; a calendar of feasts to be kept as holydays in the Order, and rubrics for the Office; and lastly, a kind of spiritual hand-book for the Sisters' use, containing pious reflections and aspirations for each of the daily exercises. There were, besides, some papers in St. Chantal's handwriting, with marginal annotations by the holy Bishop. But all was confused and incomplete, like the scattered stones of a monument which death had left unfinished.

Mother de Chantal resolved to revise and arrange these notes. But through humility, and also that the work might have the highest possible authority, she summoned to Annecy the first Mothers of the Order. As they had most intimately known St. Francis de Sales, they ought to be regarded as his most faithful interpreters. All who could obeyed the summons. They were Mother Marie-Jacqueline Favre, Superioress of Dijon; Mother de Bréchard, Superioress of Riom; Mother de Châtel, Superioress of Grenoble; Mother de Beaumont, Superioress of Paris; Mother de Mouxy, Superioress of Belley; and Mother de Compays, Superioress of Montferrand. To these were added Sister Marie Michel, Assistant of Annecy; Sister Adrienne Fichet, Assistant of Chambéry; and the four councillors of the convent of Annecy. Two of the first Mothers were absent: Mother de la Roche, who was sick, and Mother de Blonay, whom it was impossible to steal even for a few days from the love and veneration of the Lyonese. "Better would it be," they said, "that the sun should cease to shine, than that Mother de Blonay should leave Lyons." St. Chantal, who knew what confidence St. Francis de Sales had had in Mother de Blonay, resolved not to be deprived of her advice; and although Lyons was a three days' journey from Annecy, and communication could be effected only by express couriers, not a single question was decided before receiving Mother de Blonay's opinion. They consulted, also, M. Michel Favre, for so many years confessor to St. Francis de Sales, and who was still the confessor at the convent in Annecy. Through him they conferred with the Bishop of Geneva, also, without whose authority they were unwilling to act.

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[1] *Procès de Canonisation, partie compulsoriale*, fol. 271. It is evident, from the above, that Bishop de Maupas was not well informed when he said that the Chapter of Annecy, *fearing* lest Mother de Chantal's humility would lead her to resign the government of the community, had, *before her arrival*, elected her Superioress for life. (*Vie de la Vénérable Mère Jeanne-Françoise*, etc., p. 200.) The Sisters had elected her for life in her own presence, and thought of doing so only after her deposition.

There was one secular admitted to this assembly, the Countess de Dalet. Mother de Chantal felt the highest esteem for this noble lady, who possessed, she said, the clearest mind, the most solid judgment, the purest and most open soul she had ever known. If the Countess had been free, she would have kept her always at Annecy, that she might constantly consult her. She directed Mother de Compays, Superioress of Montferrand, to bring her to the council. Madame de Dalet proved herself worthy of the favor. She sat among the assembled Mothers as if the servant of all; and during the intervals between the meetings she was always to be found kneeling before the tomb of St. Francis de Sales. Fain would she have spent her life in that holy spot. Were it not for her little children, she never would have left it. "Ah!" she used to say, "those venerable remains speak in living words, for the soul efficacious and animating." [1]

The council commenced in the month of May. St. Chantal was its soul, though we would not venture to say that she presided over it. She appeared there clothed in humility, modesty, and self-forgetfulness that charmed every one. Upon each point she quoted St. Francis de Sales' ideas and opinions, but not a word of her own. When the Sisters urged her to act as Superioress and Foundress, she replied: "No, no. But since you permit it, I will consider myself among you as the eldest sister of the family, who has seen more of the father than the rest of you."

After the *Coutumier*, or *Custom-Book*, had thus been drawn up in solemn Chapter and under her direction, our saint, followed by the other Mothers, took the manuscript to the chapel, and laid it on the tomb of St. Francis de Sales. She then made the Sisters pray with her that their holy Founder might efface every word, every idea, contrary to his intentions. Inexpressible peace pervaded each heart. It was like an assurance from God Himself that the writing fully expressed the will of the saintly Bishop; and they arose from their knees full of consolation and radiant with joy.

This book is, indeed, St. Francis de Sales' own work. His sweet spirit breathes in every line. It contains, not only his ideas, but even his charming phraseology, that graceful and redolent diction all his own. We feel, nevertheless, that St. Chantal held the pen. Here and there we meet pages of entirely different style. It becomes strong, laconic, slightly imperative, and figures entirely disappear. This is St. Chantal's own style, as we shall show further on in some examples.

On leaving the chapel the Chapter was convoked, and the Custom-Book read, from beginning to end, in presence of all the Sisters. The reading finished, with one voice all exclaimed: "These are, indeed, the Directory, the spiritual counsels and customs, given and left us by our blessed

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[1] De Chaugy: *Vies Huits Vénérables Veuves.—Anne-Thérèse de Prechonnet, comtesse de Dalet*, chap. xii.

Founder and Father of happy memory, His Lordship, Francis de Sales!" The Sisters then drew up an act to make it known "To all present and future members of the Order of the Visitation." St. Chantal sent to each convent a copy of the Custom-Book, with a letter in which she conjured all the Sisters, by their respect for the memory of St. Francis de Sales, to observe these customs as faithfully as the Rules and Constitutions themselves.[1]

Thus was completed the legislation of the new Institute. It is contained in three books, namely: *The Rule of St. Augustine*, translated into French by St. Francis de Sales; the *Constitutions*, drawn up by him to explain and adapt that Rule to the end proposed; and the *Custom-Book*, compiled by St. Chantal and the first Mothers from the notes of the saintly Founder. These three volumes form one of the most complete and remarkable codes of monastic legislation, being strongly marked by that spirit of vigor and gentleness, of moderation and practical good sense, which perfects all things.

This work finished, St. Chantal began another of not less importance to the future welfare of the Order. She again took up the pen, and wrote that celebrated commentary upon the Rules of the Visitation known as "*Answers of Our Holy Mother*."[2] We are wrong in saying that she wrote it, for she never wrote anything. Her practical genius led her to action, not to writing. She could not even talk except when questioned,[3] but then no one spoke more clearly, briefly, and sensibly than she. The Sisters, who knew this, took pleasure during the recreations in plying her with questions upon every possible difficulty that might occur in the observance of the Rules, and, without her knowledge, they noted down and carefully collected her answers. Their manuscripts, constantly being multiplied, were passed around from convent to convent.

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[1] *Coutumier et Directoire, pour les Sœurs Religieuses de la Visitation Sainte-Marie.* A fine quarto edition of this book was published at Annecy in 1840. St. Chantal's letter opens the volume, and the Capitular Act is on page 249.

[2] *Réponses de Notre Sainte Mère.*

[3] "My daughters," she used to say, "I have nothing to say to you, unless you ask me some questions." And again: "My children, I am no great preacher, as you know. I can scarcely speak at all unless to answer." (See her unpublished *Chapters* and *Conferences.* First manuscript, 4to, p. 72; second manuscript, 8vo, p. 136. Archives of the Visitation of Dijon.)

The little books made up of unconnected answers were necessarily imperfect. There were many repetitions and omissions, and a want of order in the whole. It was very desirable that the saint should revise and correct them, but here was the difficulty. They dared not show them to her, lest the eloquent evidence of their veneration should share the fate of her own letters found among St. Francis de Sales' papers after his death. Such a revision was, however, indispensable. The oldest members of the Institute, Mother Favre in particular, urged the matter so earnestly, as a benefit to the Order, that the saint finally yielded. The result was a book bearing the simple but very expressive title, given it by the Sisters: "*Answers given by our Incomparable Mother during our Recreations, in this Monastery of Annecy, in Reply to the Questions put to her on our Rules, Constitutions, and Customs.*"[1] Never did title better explain the nature of a book.

It is, in fact, a kind of commentary upon all the Rules of the Visitation, an explanation, a familiar discussion upon the manner of interpreting each point of the Constitutions, with the solution of difficulties that might daily occur. Mother de Chantal's great qualities shine forth in this book, improvised, so to say, made up of every-day talk, but all the more natural on that account. In it reign good sense and moderation, a wonderful breadth of ideas, along with a perfect knowledge of the human heart, its needs, its weaknesses, its strange contradictions. In it we see consummate experience in the ways of God, and, above all, firmness and resolution rarely equalled. On no page do we find the least trace of excess or exaggeration. We feel that it is the language of a dauntless soul, of a heart kind, sympathetic, and affectionate, as far as duty permits, but never to the detriment of the Rules. The style is simple, concise, slightly imperative, as we have before remarked, but with a touch of tenderness tempering the severity of command.

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[1] *Réponses de ce que notre très-unique Mère nous a dit aux Récréations, en ce Monastère d'Annecy, répondant aux Questions que nous lui avons faites sur nos Régles, Constitutions, et Coutumes.*

The number of practical questions discussed in this book may be estimated at five or six hundred. All are not very important, there are some even apparently useless; and yet we do not hesitate to say that this solution of the innumerable difficulties which might occur in the observance of the Rules is one of the greatest graces conferred by God upon the Visitation. What has been the result? Whilst certain Religious Orders have broken up into several branches, and others, to preserve unity, have stood in need of frequent reform, the Visitation, without Superiors-General, without Visitors, and without Annual Chapters, has everywhere retained the same fervor and the same exterior conformity. To see one of St. Francis de Sales' daughters is to see them all! To visit one of St. Chantal's convents is to know them all! In the Visitation houses of France and Italy, as well as in those of America and Poland, there is not an exercise performed differently, not a single difficulty that is not solved in the same manner; and this (we again repeat, since here lies the wonder)—this without other helps than the books left them by their holy Founders, which books, it is true, contain everything.

With difficulty, as we have seen, Mother de Chantal could be induced to revise the *Answers;* but she could never be prevailed upon to have them printed. The very idea of publishing a book shocked her humility.[1] They were obliged to wait until her term of superiority was over. Then Mother Favre sent it to the printers, but with the express directions that Mother de Chantal was to know nothing about it. Unfortunately, some copies were seen at the binder's. The person who saw them, thinking they were for sale and by order of Mother de Chantal, told His Lordship Jean-François de Sales, who, greatly astonished and pained, went immediately to the convent, and asked to see the saint. "Mother," said he in a severe tone, "I have come to tell you something I have just heard, and which I deeply feel." His words surprised the saint, and she was truly amazed when he continued: "I have been told that your book of *Answers* and explanations upon the Constitutions of our blessed Father are for sale. A very great honor, indeed, to him and to your Institute for a woman to take upon herself to explain Constitutions written by so great a man! It is thought, moreover, that you do nothing without my advice." Mother de Chantal listened to his reproaches standing, with confusion in her countenance and tears in her eyes. When he had ceased speaking, she replied humbly: "Oh! my Lord, can that be true?" She acknowledged that she had answered questions upon the Rules, as well as upon the Constitutions. "You know, my Lord," she continued, "that women never know enough. I replied to the difficulties proposed to me, and after our Sisters had, without my knowledge, written down these answers, they begged me to revise them. The Superioresses, also, entreated me to do so, especially Sister Favre, who pressed me to correct them. I did so simply, without other motive than to condescend to their wishes. Seeing that they were determined to keep those answers, badly arranged as they were, I revised and corrected them very carefully, for they had been collected with an abundance of words I had never used." At this she drew back a little to wipe her eyes, for she was weeping and so affected that she could scarcely speak. "Oh, well, Mother," said the Bishop, "you must not be distressed. Do not grieve over it." To which she gently replied: "You know, my Lord, that we cannot master the first impulse. With Our Lord's help, I shall amend. This is for me a deep abjection, one of the best humiliations I have ever received. God's will be done! We shall remedy the matter without delay." On leaving the parlor, a Sister said by way of consoling her: "O Mother, the Bishop is so hasty!" "I do not mind that," she replied, "but the fact that my *Answers* have been seen without. A greater mortification than this could not have befallen me." And she added: "Ah! my pride well deserves it!" She had the *Answers* immediately returned to the convent, and that they might never again be seen outside, she desired the Sisters to bind them as well as they could themselves.[1]

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[1] When sending the book to the other convents, Mother Favre wrote as follows: "As to our most honored Mother, we concluded that she would not be displeased at the liberty we have taken to have this book printed, since it has been done so privately that no secular has seen it, and not a single leaf has been lost. We must humbly beg you, dearest Sisters, to keep it so carefully within our convents that no one may see it. The instructions contained in it are suitable for us alone, and besides, I am sure that the humility of our most worthy Mother would be deeply wounded were she to see it printed in her lifetime."

But her efforts were vain. From time to time some copies escaped from the convents in which they were hidden. They fell into the hands of the greatest Bishops of the seventeenth century, were read and consulted by Superiors and Confessors of the Visitation, admired by Cardinals and Princes of the Church, and enthusiastically approved at Rome.[2]

It was, indeed, a matter of importance to finish the publication of the Constitutions and Customs of the Order, to determine the precise import of the Rules, and clear away the obscurity of the text by means of a clear and concise commentary; but there remained something still more important to be done, and that was to impress the spirit, the hidden sense, that ineffable something contained in the letter, which is, as it were, its soul and its life. This was all the more necessary, as the foundations were daily increasing, and the convent in Annecy had become a nursery of Superioresses and Foundresses. Mother de Chantal neglected nothing for this end. Besides private advice given to each Sister, animated conversations held in recreation, numberless letters to the different Superioresses, she held every Saturday, according to the Rule, a Chapter or general assembly of the Sisters, at which she constantly spoke of the spirit of the Order, endeavoring, as it were, to enkindle the divine fire in their soul. Notes taken secretly have preserved these conferences, which were never revised by the saint, and which still remain unpublished.[3] They bear no resemblance whatever to those of St. Francis de Sales. The language is more concise, more energetic, a little incorrect, entirely void of ornaments and figures, but animated, ardent, often touching, and almost always eloquent. We shall give some examples, much less to give an idea of the saint's style than to show forth in clearer light her great and powerful mind, and with what energetic words the Daughters of the Visitation were at that time nourished.

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[1] *Mémoires inédites de la Sœur de Clermont Mont-Saint-Jean* (Archives of Annecy).

[2] *Circulaires*, vol. ii. p. 136.

[3] The convents of the Visitation are still in possession of legible copies of these *Conferences* and *Chapters*, made in the seventeenth

Speaking to them, one day, of the necessity of dying to self and to the vain desire of pleasing creatures, she said: "You say, my dearest Sisters, that there is nothing to which we are so alive as honor. Lord Jesus! what honor belongs to a servant of God except humility and abjection? Nothing would be more insupportable to me than a Sister of the Visitation mindful of points of honor. Would not that be a monstrous thing? What honor ought we to have but that chosen by our Divine Master? He placed His honor in contempt, abjection, and calumny. Fools and vain worldlings place their honor in being well-mounted, in fencing, in dancing, in gaming, in vaulting, in being great flatterers and wits. What! shall our honor, also, consist in fooleries, in holding offices in the convent, in being Superioress, Assistant, Mistress of Novices, Procuratrix? . . ." Then, after pointing out the vanity of such charges, she added: "Ah! dear Sisters, it is better, incomparably better, to be an humble Lay-Sister than a grand lady in the suite of an empress. Nay, if the choice were mine, I should rather wear the humble white veil of a Lay-Sister and wash the pots and kettles of the convent all my life than wear the richest crown of the greatest queen on earth. Yes, far better to wash dishes in God's house than string pearls in the palaces of earthly queens; a thousand times more valuable the tears, mortifications, penances, and subjection of the religious life than the honors, delights, and liberty of people of the world. Oh, how great will be the glory of those

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century. We have two in our own hands, one belonging to the convent of Dijon, the other, much more legible and complete, to the Count de Juigné, to whose courtesy we are indebted for it. From these two manuscripts, examined and compared, we have drawn the quotations contained in the following pages.

that have labored for the spouses of God! How resplendent the feet that have worn themselves out in such work! At the Day of Judgment God will say to those that have served His servants: 'What you have done for them, you have done for Me. Come, and I will glorify you.' But what will He say to the votaries of the world? 'Depart from Me, ye workers of iniquity, I know you not.' Then we shall see the poor Lay-Brothers and Lay-Sisters of religion seated upon the highest thrones, whilst many kings and queens will be in hell, or, if in heaven, below these humble servants of God and at their feet. Is it, then, a disgrace to be employed in lowly duties? Ah! if it is a disgrace, it is a very desirable one, a most glorious abjection."[1]

This was St. Chantal's habitual style in her *Chapters*, and the ordinary subject of her conversation: humility, obedience, death to self, and renunciation of all that is not God. She rarely wandered from these austere reflections, and if, by chance, she touched upon one of those beautiful subjects, so dear to St. Francis de Sales, meekness, cordiality, or simplicity, it was in an energetic and forcible manner, quite different from that of the holy Bishop.[2] Nevertheless, her tone softened when she depicted to her daughters the happiness of their vocation and the peace they enjoyed far from the vain joys of the world. "The house of God," said she one day, "is the Holy Church; the cabinet of the King is the religious life. It is now twenty-one years since it pleased the Divine Majesty to build for Himself a new cabinet, in which we may repose, and enjoy His divine presence and heavenly caresses. You know, my very dear Sisters, that when a king builds a new cabinet in some fine old castle he enriches it with gilding, paintings, and the most precious objects. He confers a great favor upon those that he takes into that cabinet, in which he is accustomed to converse alone with the queen, his dearest spouse. Well, our Saviour, our good Jesus, our sweet and adorable Spouse, has also been pleased in this our century to build a new cabinet in His royal house, and it is our little Institute that He has thus paternally and affectionately favored. We, my dear daughters, were nothing but poor, undeserving, and pitiful creatures; and yet God in His excessive goodness has chosen us for His spouses, and made us queens. He drew us into His cabinet with the golden chains of love and mercy. His delight is to be with us and to lavish favors upon us." [1]

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[1] Manuscript of the Visitation of Dijon, p. 8.

[2] See the Chapter treating of self-love and caprice when things go wrong. (Manuscript of M. de Juigné, p. 49.)

On another occasion she resumed this subject, and, in order to make the Sisters better understand the peace of the religious life, far from a world whose miseries some among them even did not suspect, she evoked her own experience and depicted in glowing terms the evils of the times: "It seems to me, my dear daughters," she said, "that, taking into consideration the great happiness of our vocation, we are not grateful enough for it. You see, Sisters, all Christendom suffering, toiling, and enduring, and we are here in our cloister, knowing nothing of the misery that war is, this moment, everywhere producing. We live in our usual peace and holy joy, tranquil and contented in our little employments. We are free from the troubles of a household, from the anxious cares of children, from the insolence of servants, the intermeddling of fathers-in-law and mothers-in-law, from the vexation of lawsuits, from the dread of hearing that a husband is killed. We are spared the sight of soldiers plundering and destroying our property, burning our farm-houses; in a word, we are relieved from innumerable evils, too numerous to particularize, and from which God has freed us that we may enjoy the peace of His house, and dwell among His well-beloved children. . . . And why, think you, dear daughters, has God treated us thus? It is that we may serve Him in holiness and justice all the days of our life; that we may pray for His people, for our good Christian brethren, for the dear neighbor who suffers so much that we can scarcely bear to hear of his misfortunes. One comes to tell us that all his relatives have died of the plague. Another says: 'The time has come in which all our property will be plundered and at the mercy of our enemies, for they have killed our neighbors.' Maidens are insulted; women are dishonored and husbands killed; widows and orphans are oppressed; and we, from all such disasters, dear Sisters, through the mercy and goodness of God, are exempt. Ah! let us exclaim with all the fervor of our heart: 'What shall we render to the Lord for all that He hath rendered to us?' "[1]

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[1] Manuscript of the Visitation, p. 79.

There are some other Chapters in the same style; but they are only, so to speak, digressions made by our saint. She soon returns to her favorite topics: humility, mortification, obedience, renunciation of self-will—those great and difficult virtues, which form the basis of perfection in all Religious Orders, but which it was peculiarly necessary to establish in the Visitation, where corporal austerities and works of mercy are not the spurs to perfection, as is the case with Carmel and the Sisters of Charity. At the risk, therefore, of too greatly multiplying quotations, we shall cite two more of these Chapters, full of energy and zeal.

"You have come here," she said one day in Chapter, "to unite yourselves with God and to disunite yourselves from all that is not God. You have left the world, and your Heavenly Spouse has led you after Him to Mount Calvary. There He allowed Himself to be stripped, nailed to the cross, crowned with thorns, drenched with gall, outraged beyond expression, and pierced in the side. In a word, He endured countless sharp and bitter things, most painful to His sacred humanity. Now, Sisters, all this must happen to you also. There are two points in this matter: first, you must destroy self, that is, you must labor faithfully and courageously at your perfection; after that you must let others do their part, allowing them to strip, flay, and scourge you as they will. If you resist, you will not be the true spouses of Jesus Christ crucified. . . . Believe me, dear Sisters, make no reserve, give all to God. Destroy whatever is displeasing to Him, despise the world, forget it with your whole heart. You must, above all, renounce self-judgment, self-will, self-love. This is the threefold renunciation that will cost you most pain, but it is truly the most necessary.

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[1] Manuscript of the Visitation, p. 88.—Manuscript of M. de Juigné, p. 44. This Chapter is incomplete in the last-named manuscript.

You should remit yourselves so entirely into the hands of those that govern you, that they may be able to twist you about as they would a handkerchief."[1]

Another day, returning from the refectory, the saint knelt a moment before the Blessed Sacrament. Suddenly her face became lit up and her countenance assumed an expression of extraordinary serenity and firmness. As soon as she was seated in the Chapter-room, the following fiery and energetic words broke from her lips:

"O God! what are we doing in this life, my dear Sisters? I assure you, I have never had so clear an idea of the beauty and excellence of death as now. Alas! what should we do here below, in this miserable valley of tears, separated from God, where solid virtue is so rare? Where is there true humility, where genuine simplicity, where a soul totally abandoned to Divine Providence? Which of us would like to be always humbled, disgraced, and undervalued? O God! if we must remain here below, let it be to practise solid virtue! For this end, my dear Sisters, I am determined not to flatter your inclinations, but to thwart them, and knowingly not to gratify one of them. O God! we act too much like children! That vexes me. Here (I mean among all the Sisters of the Institute) there should exist true, heroic, and great virtues. I can assure you, if this Order were yet to be begun, we should proceed quite differently from what we have done up to the present, at least if I felt as I do now. I am absolutely determined to mortify you well, and strenuously to contradict your inclinations. Yes, I protest, dear Sisters, before my God, that I will mortify and humble you, that I will be firmer than ever, and I regret exceedingly not having done it sooner. Henceforth I will have no trifling. We must make or break. . . . Sister Directress,[2] mortify your novices well. If there are any so sensitive that they cannot bear to be mortified, do you know the remedy? Increase their mortifications twofold, threefold, and thrice threefold. And you, Sister Novices, if you do not wish to fall, stand firm. . . . In conclusion, I will mortify you all without inclination or aversion. I have promised you that I will firmly and boldly contradict your inclinations, and I protest that I will keep my word. Whoever does not wish her inclinations thwarted must be careful not to let me see them; for, with God's help, as often as I see them, I shall put an end to them." [1]

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[1] Manuscript of the Visitation, p. 22.

[2] The Mistress of Novices.

Thus did St. Chantal address her daughters. And to whom did she complain that there was no virtue among them? To religious such as Mother Favre, Mother de Bréchard, Mother de Châtel, Mother de Blonay, and Mother de la Roche, all more or less distinguished by extraordinary gifts, all diffusing, throughout the entire world, an odor of virtue celebrated by contemporaries. But such are the saints, such the difference between them and people of the world. The latter think they do too much, the former never enough; and, when entering upon old age, as was Mother de Chantal, after a life that commands admiration, they strike their breast and with tears declare that, had they to begin again, "they would act quite differently!"

Such a religious could not endure the infraction of Rules nor the existence of the abuses that then dishonored so many Religious Orders. Rather than submit to such things she would have made any sacrifice. "O Sisters," she used to say, "you must be zealous in preventing this disorder, you, particularly, who have the honor of being the daughters of this convent of Annecy, and they who will come after you! You will be the Mothers, for you have received the first fruits of the Spirit. If any of our houses should become lax, though it were at the other end of the earth, not only the Superioress of this convent (for what is a single individual?), but the Chapter and the whole community, should write to the Bishop of the place and to the convent, and, if all this prove insufficient, recourse must be had to the Apostolic Nuncio, and even to His Holiness, without sparing any expense, going so far as to sell the sacred vessels of the Church, if necessary. . . . Ah! we should be willing to be crucified for the preservation of the Institute." [2]

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[1] Manuscript of Count de Juigné, p. 75.—Manuscript of Dijon, p. 78.

[2] *Chapitres*, p. 112.

What Mother de Chantal thus eloquently recommended to her daughters we shall see her practising herself. She spared neither fatigue nor expense either to prevent or to eradicate abuses. Two or three examples will be sufficient to reveal the character of the saint under such circumstances. They show forth her vigilance, zeal, and firmness, mild and prudent, it is true, but inflexible when there was question of watching over the interests of God and souls.

One of the wisest and most beautiful Rules of the Visitation prescribes that, after six years, the Superioresses shall lay down their charge, that, after having commanded others, they may learn again to obey. But such was sometimes the peace of a community under the happy government of a Mother de Châtel or a Mother de Blonay, that the Sisters could not bear to fulfil the Rule on this point. This happened at Grenoble, where, at the end of her six years of superiority, Mother de Châtel was, in spite of her tears and entreaties, unanimously re-elected. St. Chantal had no sooner heard the news, than she wrote to the Sisters of Grenoble, reminding them of St. Francis de Sales' intentions, pronouncing the election null, and declaring that it must be made over again. In vain did the first Mothers, then assembled at Annecy for the purpose mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, conjure the saint to make an exception in favor of Mother de Châtel. She declared that no consideration would induce her to yield in this point. Her penetrating mind foresaw that what might be granted in this instance to virtue might, perhaps, be demanded later by ambition. She, therefore, determined to destroy so dangerous an evil at its very birth. For this purpose she exacted that the election should be publicly and solemnly declared null, contrary to the Rules of the Order, and opposed to the formal intentions of St. Francis de Sales. Moreover, she charged the first Mothers, who were returning to France, to go out of their way and stop at Grenoble in order to conjure the Bishop to annul that election. This step having proved unsuccessful, the saint herself, resolved to have the Rules respected, set out for Grenoble. She found things in a state of great excitement, and plots for upholding the election existing among the Sisters' relatives. But saints possess a power of fascination known only to those that it controls. Mother de Chantal had scarcely made her appearance when the storm was calmed. The Bishop himself, who had resisted so many others, yielded without a struggle to the modest and humble remonstrances of the saint. "I never meant to make a breach in the Institute," he said, "and if you deem this election prejudicial, as Mother of the whole body you have a right to annul it." The saint replied that she possessed no authority whatever in the case, but that she entreated him, as Superior of the house, to order another election. The Bishop at once complied with her request.

Mother de Châtel's humility on this occasion was not less admirable than St. Chantal's firmness. She assisted at the meeting which annulled her election; she spoke more earnestly and energetically than the other Sisters in favor of exact observance; she went with the other Mothers to cast herself at the feet of the Bishop of Grenoble; and the tears that flowed unceasingly before His Lordship annulled her election gave evident proof of the love she bore the Rules of the Visitation.[1]

Another abuse, which appeared at this period in the convent of Moulins, was suppressed by Mother de Chantal with no less energy.

The reader will remember the ten thousand livres given by Madame du Tertre de Morville to the convent of Nevers, afterward reclaimed by her, and so unselfishly given up by Mother de Monthouz. After this affair the lady in question entered the Visitation in Moulins, where she took the habit and even made her vows, though with very little idea of the religious life. A worldling under the monastic habit, she made the convent of Moulins pay dearly for the forty thousand livres she had brought it as her dowry. Not satisfied with filling her little cell with vain and luxurious objects, with covering its walls and floor with costly hangings and carpets; not content with spending her time in continual intercourse with the world, and, as the convent was not cloistered, with turning the garden hedges into parlors, she had imposed upon the Bishop of Autun so far as to obtain permission for seven or eight of her friends to enter the inclosure whenever they wished. What was then to become of peace, silence, and regularity—those blessed guests of religious houses? Mother de Chastelluz having refused to open the doors to such entrances, Madame de Morville, now Sister Marie-Aimée, flew into a passion, prejudiced the Bishop against her, calumniated her in the parlor before seculars, and soon the convent of Moulins, the third of the Order, resembled an edifice in ruins.

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[1] *Fondation inédite de Grénoble*, p. 97.—*Mémoires de la Mère de Chaugy*, p. 195.—*Vies des premières Mères de la Visitation*, vol. i.

St. Chantal's feelings on learning this news may be imagined. She wrote at once to the Bishop of Autun, begging him to exert his authority to put a stop to the evil. "If to restore peace to this house," she wrote, "it is only necessary to return her money to our good Sister, the foundress, that she may go elsewhere to live, we shall indeed be delighted to do so; for we prefer to live in poverty and the observance of our Rules, than to abound in wealth and endure all this vexation."

She next wrote several letters to Mother de Chastelluz, who, still very young and in charge only a year, was inaugurating by this severe trial those long years of superiority in the different convents that have rendered her name so illustrious in the Order. Mother de Chantal encouraged, supported, and directed her, exhorting her now to patience, now to firmness. "O my dearest daughter," she wrote, "how precious this state of things ought to be to you! Though all the world should rise up against you, you must put your strength in God and lose not a particle of your peace or tranquil submission to His will. Have courage and confidence. After this storm, calm will return." Further on she wrote: "It is true, my dear child, we are too kind and too indulgent. Our holy Founder used, indeed, to say that we should bear with our neighbor's weakness; but malice, scandal, and the overthrow of a convent—O God! he never said that we ought to endure that! This poor creature lives in her own way, is served and lodged as pleases her, dresses as seems good to her, and without regard to Rule. She submits to no restraint and wishes to domineer. If others were not disedified, we might still bear with it; but I believe it our duty to tell her plainly that we can no longer in conscience tolerate such disorders. Alas! what a lesson to be more prudent in future!"

In another letter she says: "Impossibility alone prevents me from going to help you bear your cross; but, O God! I know how heavy it is! Send that woman who is trying your patience to us, and make no reply to her injurious language. I am very glad for dear Annecy to render a service of this kind to other convents in their troubles. My God! what a terrible one this woman is to us! Do not testify to her any distrust or bitterness, nor any ill-will on account of her injurious language. Alas! my daughter, when the friends of God are in disgrace with the world, they are greater and more honorable in His eyes."

Whilst St. Chantal was thus supporting Mother de Chastelluz, she neglected no means to arouse Sister de Morville to a sense of duty. Several very pressing letters having proved useless, and Sister de Morville having even publicly manifested her contempt for Rule, the saint wrote to her again. The tone of her letter is peculiarly gentle and sad. "My dearest daughter, since you have exposed your faults and imperfections to the Sisters, I can no longer be silent. I must complain of the scandalous disorder you cause in the house. My dear Saviour, suffer me, in my great grief, to make this complaint to Thee, as to my God. Why hast Thou permitted one so unworthy of the grace to be admitted to this holy vocation? If it is on account of my sins and imprudence, ah, my Saviour! strike me, and preserve these poor dear houses in holy peace and union; for Thou knowest that I could feel nothing more sensibly than that such a misfortune should befall them. My very dear daughter, would that I could wash out with my blood the wounds of your soul and those that you inflict on this house. At least, let the abundance of my tears move you, for I cannot prevent my heart from melting at the recital of your wretchedness. The hardness and immortification of your heart have led you into this disorder. Our great meekness, also, has contributed thereto, I think; for we hoped that, being a Christian, you would allow yourself to be gained by this method. But I plainly see that your disloyalty must be checkmated. Believe me, if I were with you, I think, with God's grace, I should bring you into subjection and prevent you from keeping the upper hand as you do."

Some days later she wrote: "My God, my dear daughter, what self-love you have! How you esteem your own judgment and cling to vanity! See, I still speak to you as to my dear child, for I cherish you with affection truly tender and maternal. But what else can I say to you, excepting that the spirit of the world, human instigations and delusions are ruining you? Ah! will you not leave this bad road, this mire? Or, indeed, do you wish by persevering in it to fall into three evils, namely, to offend God, which is the greatest of all evils, to stain your own soul, and to inflict on mine sorrow upon sorrow? One word at the close of your letter gave me a very bitter and almost sleepless night. I must tell you the truth—you cost me many a tear. You tell me that you will obey in everything excepting in being reconciled with our Sister N. My child, what kind of talk is this? Do you not know that when at variance with your neighbor you are at variance with God? O Lord Jesus, how deeply I feel this! What has Sister N. done to you? Certainly I do not know. I have, according to my custom, closely examined this affair, and I find her almost always innocent. Even were she guilty, do you not know that we must love them who hate us and bless them who curse us? Thank God, I have never taught you differently. . . . I do not write more, on account of my headache. Profit by this, my daughter, and believe that it comes from a mother's heart. I have many prayers said for you, and I myself pray much, for I pity your present state. But I am confident that God will put clay upon your eyes to open them. You understand me well."

Letters so earnest and affectionate, prayers so holy, were not fruitless. The poor Sister began to awaken to a consciousness of her misconduct, and give hope of amendment. Mother de Chantal then changed the tone of her letters. She encouraged and sustained, enlightened and animated her to conversion perfect and lasting. Deeply penitent, Sister Morville cast herself at the feet of Mother de Chastelluz, asking her pardon, acknowledging her calumnies, and shedding floods of tears. The good Mother knew not how to console her. She then cut off her hair, tore down the hangings from her cell, removed its costly pictures, and begged the favor of returning to the novitiate. Her request was granted, and she spent twelve months in the constant practice of penance and regularity, at the end of which she begged to renew her profession publicly at the choir-grate. She invited to the ceremony the most distinguished persons of the city. In their presence she asked pardon for her past conduct and, at the close of the ceremony, tore up the papers granting her the privileges of foundress. She was too happy, she said, to hold the last place in a house from which she had deserved to be expelled. She lived only fifteen months after this, in ever-increasing fervor, and died in the odor of sanctity.[1]

Whilst St. Chantal was rejoicing at the happy termination of an affair that had caused her so much anxiety, her heart was again torn by another and somewhat similar case. The Superioress of one of the convents had violated the law of inclosure. She had gone to the Bourbon Springs and, on her return, had stopped to rest at the country residence of one of her brothers. Report added, though without proof, that she had appeared at the springs with such pomp, and her demands were so imperious, that the hotel-keepers said they would rather serve a great lord than "Madame, the Abbess of Sainte-Marie," for it was thus, they said, she obliged them to call her. Sick and unable to travel, St. Chantal wrote to the accused Superioress to learn the truth of the affair. "My daughter, in the first place, I protest to you," wrote the saint, "that not one of your Sisters has written to me. I have heard nothing of what has passed from your house, but only from one of our convents. Several of them, hearing of your visit to the Bourbon Springs, have informed me of the particulars of the journey, which, if they are true, will be prejudicial to and a source of scandal not only to your own community, but to the whole Order. They write me that you travelled with two carriages, in one of which you were in company with a Sister, a Father Minim, your brother, and the physician, and in the other were three Sisters, an Out-Sister, and some seculars, and that you kept open house at Bourbon. You, my very dear daughter, can tell me whether that is so or not. As to what has been said about your being obliged, under pain of mortal sin, to obey the command to go to the springs, it was, my daughter, a command extorted from your Bishop, not a voluntary act of His Lordship. If you had represented the matter to him with due humility and respect, I am sure that he would not have renewed the command. It is probably for this reason that the Sisters say you treated our blessed Father and me with contempt, because you did not follow either his intention or mine, as I have explained in the *Answers*. And, in fine, if all is true that they tell me about the walks you have taken since your return from Bourbon, and the other things reported to me, certainly, my daughter, such conduct is entirely contrary to the customs and spirit of our Institute. But I await the truth of the matter."

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[1] *Fondation inédite de Moulins*, p. 69.—*Vies des plusieurs Supérieures, etc. La Mère Hélène de Chastelluz*, p. 272.

As the Superioress in question had complained of her subjects, and as the latter, dissatisfied with such a head, murmured loudly against her, our saint added, with that spirit of prudence and moderation which can never be too highly exalted: "Your Sisters have done very wrong to revolt against obedience; for if they had anything to say, they should with humility and charity have made their representations to those who had power to remedy the evil, and not have murmured and complained both within and without the house. That was very wrong. They were right in thinking that I do not approve of complaints, for it is very true. But I do approve of humble and charitable remonstrances, and I do not find fault with those that make them truthfully."

Then, after indicating the only possible remedy, which was to send a good priest and some exemplary Sisters to restore peace to the community, she added these forcible words to let the erring Superioress see that she had not been duped by her underhand dealing: "Moreover, my dear daughter, I cannot refrain from telling you with my usual frankness how much I am astonished at your taking steps so important to the Institute without saying a word to me about them until afterward, although you make so great profession of confidence in me. For I knew nothing at all about your journey to Brittany, your visit to the springs, and the foundation for which you already received two candidates, until all had taken place. Not that I wish to subject you to communicate these things to me, but only to let you see that I am not yet such a simpleton as not to perceive that you ask my advice in unimportant matters just for the sake of corresponding with me, and that in things of importance, when my advice might be useful, you do as you choose, and then consult me about them. . . . Forgive me, my dear daughter, for speaking in this way; but, as long as I live, I must speak the truth to all our Institute, whether they take it well or ill. I do what my conscience dictates. It is not that I wish to play the mother over others, but because I feel myself bound to act in this manner."

The Superioress in question gave an evasive answer to this letter. The necessity of a canonical deposition was evident; but before applying to ecclesiastical authority, which alone could remedy the evil, St. Chantal resolved to make a last effort with the delinquent herself, to induce her to resign her charge. "I repeat," she wrote, "that your deposition is absolutely necessary for the glory of God, for the restoration of your house, and for the reputation of your Institute. It would be more to your honor if you yourself were to ask for it, and that I entreat you to do. If you do not resign, the Bishop will depose you."

Receiving no answer, the saint wrote to the Bishop begging him to remedy the scandal by ordering the deposition of her who had given rise to it. The first letter produced no effect, as the Bishop was prejudiced in favor of the delinquent. But St. Chantal was not to be discouraged. She wrote two more, couched in terms so humble and urgent, with details so precise, that the Bishop, at last, saw clearly, as he wrote to the saint, that the Superioress in question was a weak-minded woman and totally incapable of her charge. He went to the monastery, determined to put an end to the trouble. The Superioress was canonically deposed for having gravely transgressed the Rules, and condemned never again to exercise authority in the Order, in which she was henceforth to live in disgrace. She was afterward transferred to another convent.

All this was not considered a sufficient remedy for evils so great. It was judged necessary to scatter among the most fervent houses the Sisters that had been most under the influence of the disgraced Superioress, and supply their places by religious of distinguished virtue. By this means peace and fervór were soon restored in the community. As the house was deeply in debt, St. Chantal wrote to all the other convents of the Order, entreating them to hasten to its assistance. The answer to this appeal was a brilliant manifestation of the union, charity, and disinterestedness of the various houses. During those years of pestilence and famine, the horrors of which we shall soon recount, when almost every community felt the pangs of hunger, and when St. Chantal herself used to say, "Oh, the poverty of our houses is pitiful!" those very houses assumed burdens immense for the times, paid off the large debts of their less fortunate Sisters, whose house a few years later, thanks to this help, was numbered amongst the holiest and most flourishing of the Order.

The deposed Superioress, also, gave a noble example to the whole Institute of the manner in which public faults should be expiated. During the two years and some months that she afterward lived in deep humiliation, to which were soon added great interior trouble and painful sickness, she uttered not a word of complaint. Jesus Christ crucified became her only study. The last months of her life were spent in sentiments of the most lively contrition and generous penance. She died holily, in her thirty-sixth year, having so greatly consoled Mother de Chantal and edified the Sisters that they forgot her faults. Her memory is still cherished in the Order.

How did Mother de Chantal accomplish all these works? What was her manner of acting in the reform of abuses, when converting the guilty, and maintaining regularity and fervor? She never once appealed to her authority. Activity, energy, gentleness, were the only means she employed. "I do not say this to you through any kind of authority," were the concluding words of the last letter she wrote about this unfortunate affair. "Oh no, dear Sisters, for by the grace of God I neither have nor desire any other than that with which holy charity invests me as your eldest sister who loves you and wishes you all the blessings and that perfection which I desire for myself."

By these letters and her manner of proceeding on these occasions Mother de Chantal is shown in her true light. Resolution and energy are always the salient points in her character; but humility and prudence moderate her firmness and temper her zeal. We see her ready to die, to be crucified, as she used to say, rather than tolerate an abuse or suffer a single Rule to be violated; but, again, ready to die, to give every drop of her blood, and whilst awaiting the end desired, giving her whole heart to the task of enlightening, moving, converting, and leading back to the path of perfection any one of her dear daughters that had wandered from it. She had not, like St. Dominic and St. Francis Assisi, the glory of creating her Order, nor, like St. Teresa, the pain of reforming it; but she had the humble happiness of co-operating in its foundation; of perfecting its organization after the death of St. Francis de Sales; of propagating it throughout the world; of defending it against the innumerable dangers incident to new works; and of preserving it as long as she lived in fervor, zeal, and union. By this title she surely deserves a place among those great men and women whom the Church venerates under the title of Founders of Religious Orders.

CHAPTER V.

SPREAD OF THE ORDER OF THE VISITATION.—ST. CHANTAL'S JOURNEY TO LORRAINE.—GOD MORE CLEARLY MANIFESTS THE SANCTITY OF THE VENERABLE FOUNDRESS.

1624—1626.

IT would be impossible for an Order governed like the Visitation, in which every kind of virtue flourished, in which abuses were so energetically repressed, and which, after having had so holy and amiable a Bishop for its Founder, was now guided by a woman like St. Chantal, not to spread with great rapidity. Consequently, foundations arose on every side.

Whenever a foundation was decided on, the following ceremonies were observed. A little before their departure, the Sisters chosen to begin the new house knelt down in full Chapter and solemnly swore to live and die in the observance of the Rules, Constitutions, and Customs of the Institute, and to cause them to be inviolably observed. This protestation was inscribed in the Chapter-Book and all signed it, after which they gave the other Sisters the farewell kiss of peace. This final step was taken after they had obtained permission from the Bishop and municipal authorities of the place in which they proposed establishing a convent.[1] If the Sisters of the foundation travelled on horseback, the most usual mode at that period, they wore a hood, or a small veil of thin black stuff, which fell over the eyes, and a kerchief tied under the chin.[2] If they went in carriages, their escorts were not to travel in the same vehicle with them, that they might be at liberty to perform their spiritual exercises as if in their convent. For the same reason, when they went by water they had part of the cabin curtained off for their use. On arriving at their destination, they loosened their veils from the shoulder, proceeded to the church, where they sang the *Laudate Dominum*, and then went processionally to the house prepared for them, after which without delay "they sent some one to offer their respects to the Bishop of the place and present to him their obedience." [1]

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[1] *Coutumier*, art. ii., *Des Fondations*, p. 6.

[2] *Petite Coutume de ce Monastère de la Visitation Sainte-Marie d'Annecy*, p. 56.

The first foundation made (May 11, 1623) after the death of St. Francis de Sales, that of Marseilles, presented few difficulties. It had been prepared by the holy Bishop himself, who had even designated the Sisters to commence the establishment. Provence, which was soon to be dotted over with Visitation convents, welcomed the first Daughters of St. Francis de Sales with mingled feelings of joy and sadness, "as the living relics of one of the holiest Bishops God had ever given to His Church." [2] The Superioress was Sister Françoise-Marguerite Favrot. When they announced the choice that had been made of her, she cast herself in tears at her Superioress' feet, conjuring her not to offer such an insult to the new community as to place over it a person so incapable as herself.[3] Actions such as this used to make St. Chantal's heart thrill with joy. "If you did but know," she wrote, "how great a servant of God the Superioress whom we send you is! But for such a work, such a person is needed." [4]

The foundation of Riom, in Auvergne, which followed in a few months (December 8, 1623), had also been prepared by St. Francis de Sales; but great obstacles interfered with its accomplishment. It was resumed shortly after the saintly Bishop's death by Mother de Bréchard. We must here enter into some particulars to show, on the one hand, what kind of a woman this Mother de Bréchard was, and, on the other, what the foundation of a convent sometimes costs.[1]

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[1] *Coutumier*, art. ii., *Des Fondations*, p. 6.

[2] *Fondation inédite de Marseille.* (Archives of Annecy.)

[3] *Vies des Vénérables Veuves.—La Mère Françoise-Marguerite Favrot*, chap. iii.

[4] Letter to Mother de Bréchard at Riom. June, 1623.

The obstacle in this case lay in the ill-will of the municipal authorities, who, under pretext of not burdening their city, which was poor, with new expenses, refused their authorization. In vain did Madame de Chazeron, daughter of Marshal de Saint-Géran, Governor of Bourbonnais, and maid of honor to Queen Marie de Médicis, write to signify her pleasure upon the subject. The opposing party still found means to hamper the undertaking they were forced to authorize. Among other conditions, they required a heavy security, and stipulated that the town and its inhabitants should not be called upon to assist the establishment in any way whatever. They hoped thus to discourage the Sisters from the enterprise; but they little knew Mother de Bréchard. As soon as she was notified that permission had been given, she set out for Riom. On her arrival she sent her salutations to the authorities, and commenced her search for a suitable house. But the difficulty was not yet conquered. They who had given a forced consent to the enterprise merely as a matter of form, and because they dared not refuse the Queen, responded coldly and even sharply to Mother de Bréchard's salutation, and summoned her to lay down the stipulated security before purchasing a house. Mother de Bréchard was ready for them. Whilst searching for a house, she had found several ladies who were delighted to answer for the Daughters of St. Francis de Sales. Security given, she purchased a dwelling near the court-house and was beginning to raise the walls of the inclosure, when an officer appeared to stop the work, under pretext that the wall would darken the windows of the town-hall. Mother de Bréchard hesitated not an instant. She sold the house, and bought another in a retired quarter, thinking thus to avoid every possibility of opposition. But suddenly there arose a storm more violent than the preceding. Among the ladies who had gone security for the Sisters was Madame de Dalet, a widow, as our readers may recall, and the mother of four children. The enemies of the Sisters took advantage of this circumstance. By the advice of a lawyer, they paraded the four little children through the streets, and presented them before the City Council, conjuring the magistrates to befriend the orphans whom an unnatural mother had abandoned for the service of strangers. The whole story was, of course, a fabrication; but the mob took fire, for what reason they knew not, as is generally the case, and Mother de Bréchard was obliged to leave Riom and withdraw to Montferrand.

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[1] *Fondation inédite du quinzième Monastère de la Visitation en la Ville de Riom*, p. 177.

Every one, even St. Chantal, thought the project would have to be relinquished. The saint wrote: "Since it pleases God to allow these gentlemen of Riom to oppose so stoutly and perseveringly your establishment in their city, I think you would do exceedingly well to withdraw humbly and meekly." She advised Mother de Bréchard to take the Sisters back to Lyons, whence it would be easy to send them to some of the cities that had been so long soliciting a foundation.[1]

Before resorting to this alternative, so repugnant to her zeal and not imposed by obedience, Mother de Bréchard determined to make another effort. Disregarding the advice of friends, who thought she was exposing herself and her Sisters to insult, she returned to Riom secretly toward nightfall. When her return became known, there was, in fact, great excitement. In vain did she protest that she came with peaceful intentions; that she would not attempt the establishment without the consent of the authorities; that she thought it would be easier to treat with them in Riom than from a distance. Her reasons were not satisfactory. The City Council was hastily convened to consult "upon the impending danger." "From every direction," say the old *Mémoires*, "men were seen hastening to the town-hall, as intent upon the overthrow of the establishment as if the prosperity of Auvergne depended upon it. Some even cried aloud through the streets, as the Jews of old did against Our Lord: 'Away with these nuns! Out with them!' This made some pious persons say that the Daughters of the Visitation might be called the spouses of Christ Crucified."

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[1] Letter of September 17, 1623.

The Council proceeded with violence. It was decided that if the religious would not leave the place voluntarily, they should be forced to do so, "a decision somewhat sharply communicated to the Superioress by one of the members and a constable." Mother de Bréchard answered respectfully, but firmly, that she would depart at the first command of obedience, and that she would at once write her Superiors to that effect.

The populace was roused, and Mother de Bréchard was notified that some act of violence was to be apprehended during the night. M. de la Lande, a venerable old man over sixty, full of good-will toward the Sisters, armed himself with a halbert, declaring that he would pass the night near the door of the convent, and that no one should enter the house but over his body, which speech somewhat amused Mother de Bréchard and her little band. Some friends of the convent did stay all night in the parlors, an unnecessary precaution, however, as no attempt at disturbance was made. Next day the authorities notified them again to depart. They granted them a few days longer in the city, though not in their convent, to settle their affairs. Any other than Mother de Bréchard would have been crushed; but she was working for God. Almost every post brought her a line from the holy Foundress, to console, encourage, and direct her. "My poor dearest Sister," wrote St. Chantal, "whose heart would not ache on hearing the assaults and struggles you are undergoing? The gentlemen will certainly, sooner or later, feel remorse for having treated you so shamefully. May God in His mercy pardon them, and give you the grace and courage to withdraw from this painful affair with the meekness and humility that our blessed Father would have practised on such an occasion. I beg you, my poor dearest Sister, to keep him before your eyes in this trial. . . . It was not his wish that force should be used in such circumstances, or that we enter a city without the good-will of the people. Therefore, my dearest daughter, I think it very proper for you sweetly to withdraw, as I have already told you."[1]

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[1] Letter of October 5, 1623 (Archives of the Visitation of Annecy).

Our saint constantly reiterated this advice. She wished the affair terminated by an humble withdrawal. Mother de Bréchard had finally so decided, and Madame de Dalet had even made arrangements to take the Sisters back to Lyons, when a glimmer of hope suddenly appeared.

Driven from their convent, the Sisters had taken refuge in a house lent them by Madame de Montfan, mother of Madame de Dalet. This house happened to be next that occupied by the very lawyer so inimical to the foundation. His room was so situated that he could watch the Sisters all day long. Their silence and recollection, their suppressed chant, for they dared not raise their voices for fear of being heard in the street, and the regularity of their exercises made so great an impression upon their hostile neighbor, that his views completely changed. He became their friend; and, to repair the injury he had done them, he set to work to obtain for them the authorization withdrawn by the Council. Marie de Médicis, also, wrote in very pressing terms to the Bishop of Clermont, to M. Demeurat, Lieutenant-General of Riom, and to the members of the Council. It was thought that the enterprise would now certainly succeed; but what can be done against wounded self-love? All these letters and negotiations resulted in an increase of humiliations for Mother de Bréchard and her companions. The recital of what they had to undergo drew tears from Mother de Chantal. "Alas!" she wrote to Mother de Bréchard, "is it possible for me not to weep, knowing that my poor, dear, much beloved, and old companion is undergoing so much labor, contempt, abjection, contradiction, and affliction! O my daughter, believe that God wishes to sanctify your beloved heart by all these crosses." [1]

After despatching the above, she set out for Riom,[2] resolved to terminate the affair, or take the Sisters away with her. She reached Riom November 27, 1623, and stopped there only three hours; but in those three hours the undertaking, vainly negotiated by the Queen, was happily accomplished. The saint visited the authorities, who at once granted the permission so long disputed, "her heavenly words having gained more by their ingenuousness, simplicity, and frankness, than all the efforts hitherto made." The ceremony of installation was deferred until December 8th, either in honor of the Immaculate Conception, to which the saint had great devotion, or because, being obliged to go to Montferrand, she could not return before that time. On the appointed day, in the humble house from which Mother de Bréchard had been driven, and before an altar sparkling with jewels belonging to the ladies of Riom, the Act of Foundation was solemnly read by the officiating ecclesiastic, inclosure established, and Mass celebrated, all to the great satisfaction of the people, even of the authorities themselves. After Mass, St. Chantal herself intoned the *Te Deum*, which was joyfully continued by the Sisters.[1]

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[1] *Vie de la Mère de Bréchard.* Letter of November, 1623.

[2] *Fondation inédite de Riom,* p. 185.

The business that had taken Mother de Chantal to Montferrand was the vocation of the Countess de Dalet and the desire to pacify a family irritated and disunited by it. Shortly after the grace Almighty God had bestowed upon this noble lady, namely, that of a high degree of prayer and the clear understanding of the happiness of the religious life, He conferred upon her a still more precious favor. One morning, July 2d, feast of the Visitation, after receiving Holy Communion, she was rapt in contemplation. It seemed to her that her soul left her body and journeyed to a distant country. Suddenly she perceived a venerable Bishop laboring as a mason. He built a new house and arranged everything in it with exquisite order. She attempted to enter, but could not find the door. Whilst in this dilemma she heard a voice saying: "Pray and hope. You will find it later." Some months after, meeting St. Francis de Sales for the first time, she exclaimed: "Look! Look! the Bishop of my vision!" From that day her choice was made. She made a vow of chastity, and promised God to enter the Visitation as soon as her four little children were grown.

It was long to wait, for the eldest was just able to walk, and the youngest was only one month old. Meantime, she frequently entered the convent of Montferrand, which she had founded, and to indemnify herself for not being able to take the habit of the Visitation, she sought earnestly to acquire its spirit. All went well for some years, and then violent storms arose. One of the most powerful noblemen of the kingdom asked the hand of the Countess. He was a young widower with a son and a daughter of the same age as the son and eldest daughter of the Countess. The hope of a triple alliance, as well as the high esteem in which he held Madame de Dalet's virtue, influenced his suit. Madame de Montfan looked with favor on the proposal, and did all in her power to win her daughter's consent. But her efforts proving useless, she assembled a number of theologians and members of different Religious Orders for the purpose of making such a refusal a matter of conscience. As their arguments failed to move Madame de Dalet, they brought in her four little children, who had been previously instructed to enact a little scene. Two threw themselves upon their mother's neck, the other two knelt at her feet, conjuring her to sacrifice herself for their welfare. Madame de Dalet afterwards acknowledged that this scene almost broke her heart.

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[1] *Fondation inédite de Riom,* p. 177.

Some time after the Countess went with her mother and her four little children to visit the Bishop of Clermont, who was her near relative. When she was least expecting such a thing, she beheld her mother and children fall on their knees before the prelate. With tears they entreated him, by the ties of blood and affection that bound him to them, and for the future welfare of the little orphans, to give his consent to the marriage and forbid the Countess ever again to put her foot inside a convent of the Visitation. This attempt proving equally unsuccessful, Lady de Montfan convened a family council. With one voice Madame de Dalet was called upon to accept the proposed alliance; otherwise they would no longer recognize her as their relative. She knew not how to reply to entreaties so pressing. Convinced that it was time to put an end tó scenes so painful, she threw herself on her knees in the midst of the assembly, and declared that, on the day God took the Count de Dalet to Himself, she made a vow of perpetual chastity, and had since renewed it a hundred times. Now came an explosion of anger. Madame de Montfan, losing all self-control, fell upon her daughter, abused her in words, beat her, and, although it was in the depth of winter, drove her and her four children from the castle. When poor Madame de Dalet and her little ones were outside, the infuriated mother ordered the drawbridge to be raised, the gates locked, and the key brought to her. The young Countess, driven thus from her own home, wrapped the youngest child in her robe, took the second on her back, and led the other two, still very young, by the hand. A peasant gave them shelter for the night. "Yes, my dearest Mother," she wrote at this time to Mother Favre, "it is true that I have had the honor of being beaten and scourged for my beloved vocation; but, truly, of all the outrages heaped upon me, none equalled the shame of seeing myself and my poor little children driven with cuffs and kicks from my own house. Have you ever seen poor women going about with their children in their arms and hanging around their neck? I was a picture of them. But, my dearest Mother, what a merciful God we have! He, indeed, allowed my senses to revolt against this treatment, on account of my little children; but my heart was so full of joy and peace that, though propriety forbade my singing aloud, I sang mentally. After my mother had thus driven me out, a poor peasant woman received me, and lent me two of her kerchiefs, of which I made nightcaps for myself and my poor children. She gave up her bed to me, also. I laid my four little ones in it, but as for myself, I had so much to say to my good God that I did not lie down at all that night."

Such violence could not last. The mother remembered that she was a mother and recalled her daughter. St. Francis de Sales was chosen arbiter in the case. He poured upon the wound the balm of his sweetness, moderation, and good sense. It was settled that Madame de Dalet should remain in the world to attend to the education of her children, but without being importuned to marry again, and that she should be left free to devote herself to whatever good works Almighty God might inspire her to perform.

Unfortunately, after the death of St. Francis de Sales the painful dissension was renewed. The foundation of the convent of Riom revived it with such warmth that St. Chantal was obliged to intervene. Prudently and calmly, but with great firmness and energy, she made both mother and daughter listen to reason.

She showed the former that it is a crime to force into a second marriage, and through ambitious motives, one whom God had honored with a call to His service; on the latter she impressed that there may be excess even in the best things, and that the merit of her life should be to harmonize what she owed to her mother, her children, and her vocation. Madame de Dalet understood the sublime lesson. She remained ten years longer in the world, occupied with her children, all of whom she settled honorably in life. Her devotedness to the Visitation did not diminish. Though in the world, she led the life of a religious, wore haircloth under her rich garments, and never made use of a carriage or a sedan, excepting once or twice a year for visits of ceremony. After fifteen years of ardent longing, on the morrow of her youngest daughter's marriage, she received the habit of the Order, and, by an exception advised by St. Chantal and of which we find no other example, two days after her profession she was elected Superioress of the convent of Montferrand.[1]

After the termination of this affair, which in Mother de Chantal's opinion was of great importance, she set out for Chambéry, where a foundation, projected whilst St. Francis de Sales was still alive, but delayed by various events, was now on the point of being made. Our saint herself gives us an account of the commencement of this house, which, in fact, could not but succeed in a city not only so near Annecy, but still resounding with the eloquent words of the holy Bishop of Geneva, the striking conversion of Mother Favre, and the vocation of Mother de Beaumont.

"We left Annecy," she says, "January 14, 1624, with our Sisters Marie-Adrienne Fichet, Claude-Marie Thiollier, Marie-Gasparde Davise, Gasparde-Angélique Brunier, Claude-Agnès

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[1] *Vies des Veuves.—Anne-Thérèse de Préchonnet* (in the world Countess de Dalet), religious and foundress of the Visitation of Montferrand.

Dalos, Claude-Cécile de Châtel, and Jeanne-Étiennette Guyot, accompanied by M. Michel Favre, our confessor, and other reverend and secular gentlemen of Annecy, and arrived in this city on the 15th of the same month, through the assistance of His Lordship Thomas of Savoy, who sent one of his carriages for us. This great prince, incomparable in virtue and piety, favored our establishment and gave us large alms, particularly a beautiful altar-cloth and chasuble of crimson damask trimmed with large gold spangles. This good prince wished to meet us on our entrance into the suburbs with a procession from the city, headed by himself, and conduct us in this style to our house. But we told him that we would be glad to enter with more simplicity and less display; so he yielded. We found our house so surrounded by people that, in spite of the efforts of the Prince's guards, it was with great difficulty we could get into the church, where the Blessed Sacrament was already exposed, and numbers of candles and flambeaus lighted.[1] The good and pious M. Morris, curé of Lémenc, came forward to receive us with holy water and incense, and immediately after the choir of the Holy Chapel sang the *Te Deum*, followed by an anthem of joy and praise to God. The Rev. Dean Favre gave Benediction with the Blessed Sacrament, and after that conducted us into our choir, children carrying lighted candles before us. We sang the *Laudate Dominum*, and then they withdrew, for the house had been blessed. The Blessed Sacrament was exposed till the third day, which was the feast of St. Antony. Ladies were allowed to enter the convent on that day also, and in the evening, after Complin and the Litany had been sung, Rev. M. Favre, the Dean, gave Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament to the immense numbers who filled the house. The choir sang hymns and canticles of praise to God, to whom be honor and glory forever and ever! Amen."[2]

The above is the *procès-verbal*, we may say, of the installation of the Sisters of the Visitation in Chambéry. It was written by the hand of St. Chantal. Despite the saint's careful reticence, the triumphal character of this foundation is evident: the Prince sending his carriage to meet her, and his wish to receive her processionally; the crowd so dense that even the guards and soldiers could scarcely effect an entrance into the church; the ladies, who find three entire days too short to visit the house and gratify their pious eagerness to see the saint; and the clergy themselves, who fill the sanctuary and advance to receive her with holy water and incense. Among the latter was, without doubt, M. Maurice Maupeau, a holy and humble priest, whose virtues had drawn upon him the admiration of St. Francis de Sales, and who, upon hearing of the arrival of the Sisters in Chambéry, left a very important parish to become their confessor. He served them without remuneration as long as he lived, "because," as he used humbly to say, "I look upon myself as a poor little dog in the house of Our Lord. Now a dog takes nothing in his master's house but his food, and yet no one is more faithful to the master than he. Since, then, I have sufficient from other sources for a modest support, that suffices."[1]

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[1] Prince Thomas, unable to prevail upon the saint to allow him to receive her as he desired, ordered the Blessed Sacrament to be exposed before her arrival. "Good Mother de Chantal will be so pleased to find Our Lord waiting for her, that it will give her more joy than anything we could do." (*Mémoires de la Mère de Changy*, p. 192.)

[2] *Histoire manuscrite de la Fondation de Chambéry*, p. 210.

Whilst the convent of Chambéry was succeeding so happily under the care of Mother de Chantal, Mother de Blonay, the Superioress of Lyons, was sending a colony to Avignon, under not less favorable, though very different, circumstances. About twelve years before the period of which we are now writing, there lived at Avignon a lady of extraordinary sanctity, named Madame de Capelis. Married at the age of twelve, a mother at sixteen, a widow at seventeen, she had devoted herself to God with an ardor that recalled and even surpassed what we find in the "Lives of the Saints." Seeing her young, beautiful, and tormented with temptations, her confessor gave free rein to her fervor, and permitted her great austerities. Three times a day she took the discipline to blood, and that so copiously as to oblige her to have water in readiness to wash the stains from the walls of her chamber, lest her domestics might divine her secret.

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[1] *Histoire manuscrite de la Fondation de Chambéry,* p. 210.

She often wore the hair-shirt and the iron cincture. She fasted thirty consecutive years, eating but one loaf a day, and that at two o'clock in the afternoon. In her chamber was a bed richly upholstered, as befitted her high station, and which she used only till the household had retired, when she rose quietly, spread a carpet on the floor, and there lay until the first bell for Matins at the Augustinians, at which she always assisted. She made six hours' prayer every day and gave the rest of her time to the poor who flocked to her gate. She died at the age of sixty-three, in the odor of sanctity.[1] The Venerable César de Bus, founder of the "Fathers of Christian Doctrine," her confessor, declared that he had never known a holier soul.

This venerable widow had gathered around her a number of young girls, who followed her advice and example, without rules, it is true, but with the design of forming themselves into a Congregation. The death of their foundress cast the little community into trouble. Some lost courage and returned to the world; others retired into cloistered communities. The nine or ten who remained elected one of their number, Blanche Morard, Superioress, and determined to continue their life in common under the Rule of St. Ursula. They were wanting neither in fervor nor generosity, and yet the enterprise did not prosper. Misunderstanding arose among the heads of the community, and they knew not what was to become of them. Things were in this state when they heard of the rising Visitation, of the mildness of its Rules, the perfection of its spirit, the possibility and even facility of their joining it, by inviting some Sisters to found a convent at Avignon. The proposal gave universal satisfaction, and they wrote to Mother de Blonay on the subject. The latter was, at the time, Superioress of the convent in Lyons, whither postulants had been flocking since St. Francis de Sales' death. Glad of the opportunity thus to diminish the number of Sisters in her community, and at the same time to spread the Order, she at once sent Mother Marie-Claire de la Balme, a soul of great holiness, and five professed Sisters to begin the foundation. Blanche Morard received Mother de le Balme kneeling, gave up to her the keys and government of the house with humility that never changed, and she and her nine companions entered the novitiate.

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[1] August 31, 1612. See *Fondation inédite d'Avignon*, p. 191. See also, *Vie de Madame de Capelis*, in *Vies des premières Mères de la Visitation d'Avignon*. 1 vol. 12mo, Avignon, 1684.

All was not finished, however. Immense difficulties lay before them, owing to the numberless formalities necessary for the establishment of a convent at that period. Doubtless Mother de la Balme, who was a person of superior intelligence and great holiness, would have gradually removed every obstacle. But God willed her another kind of triumph. In the midst of the difficulties that opposed the enterprise, she was suddenly taken ill and died in a few days. Then was beheld a remarkable spectacle. This nun, who had entered the city veiled, who was hidden behind the grate of her convent, and with whom so few were acquainted, was visited when she lay on her bier by crowds proclaiming her a saint, and touching her venerated remains with their chaplets and crosses. Over ten thousand touched her habit and kissed her feet. To satisfy the piety of the faithful, the Sisters were obliged to allow her remains to be exposed two days and two nights in the chapel of the Fathers of Christian Doctrine. During that time they remained fresh and flexible, the cheeks and lips red, the countenance angelic, exhaling so delightful a perfume that they who entered the chapel could not tear themselves away. Twelve days after, the Sisters of the Visitation, desirous of seeing once more their beloved Mother, opened the coffin and found her as fresh and beautiful, exhaling as sweet a perfume, as on the first day. It was for them a powerful stimulus to virtue. Before such a tomb what opposition could live? The authorization so long and vainly demanded by Mother de la Balme was granted, and the convent was solemnly established, March 8, 1624, in presence of the Vice-Legate, Mgr. Cosme de Bardy, his retinue, and the municipal authorities of the city.[1]

But great as was the enthusiasm at Avignon, it did not equal that with which, five months later, August 20, 1624, the Sisters of the Visitation were received at Aix, Provence. "When the President of the Parliament and his very estimable lady," say the old *Mémoires*, "learned that Mother de Chantal had consented to send them some Sisters, according to their request, and that their Superioress would be good Mother de Châtel, inexpressible joy reigned throughout their mansion and filled the hearts of all attached to their service. They embraced one another, saying: 'We shall have St. Francis de Sales' daughters among us! We shall see those great servants of God!' The day the Sisters arrived from Grenoble the noble ladies went out in carriages to meet and accompany them several leagues. The Provost and his vicar, the Canons of the Chapter, and the municipal officers went in procession, with a band of music, to receive them. Mother de Châtel presented her letters of obedience, and, after receiving the Provost's blessing, the Sisters were conducted to their humble house. The popular acclamations were so enthusiastic that they drowned the music. It was impossible for the Sisters to sing the *Laudate Dominum*, according to their custom, so great was the press of people, the confused noise of the musical instruments and the joyful cries of the crowd."[1] Next day solemn High Mass was celebrated, the Blessed Sacrament exposed, and for three days inclosure was not established, that the people might visit the house and see the Sisters. So great was the concourse during these three days that "it was impossible to approach the door to carry provisions to the Sisters. The President's kind lady, at whose invitation they had come to Aix and who had undertaken to maintain them these three days at her own expense, was forced to invent a means by which food might be conveyed to them by the roof."[2]

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[1] *Fondation inédite du Monastère d'Avignon,* p. 197.

But consoling as were these two foundations of Avignon and Aix for St. Chantal, she was silently preparing another still dearer to her heart, namely, that of Autun. Autun was her second country. She had lived there nearly eight years, and there she had loved the poor more than anywhere else on earth. There, too, she had suffered, and there her daughter was now living. Her dearest friends, Madame de

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[1] *Fondation inédite du Monastère d'Aix*, p. 216.

[2] *Ibid.* p. 217.

Roussillon, Madame de Saffres, and Madame de Chastelluz, whom she had left behind her in the world, were there sanctifying their life. She had there known priests of extraordinary virtue. Oh, how many reasons for loving Autun, and for sending thither a colony of her daughters! She had long revolved the project in her mind, and the foundation would have been already made, as she said, had she not wished to select for it with her own hand a precious stone. This precious stone was none other than that young Hélène de Chastelluz whom she had found upon the very spot, and who, possessed of virtue from her youth and now enriched with experience, was commencing, by the government of the convent in Moulins, that series of labors which, after sanctifying her life, have illustrated her memory. Not without difficulty did Mother de Chantal obtain her for the new enterprise. She succeeded, however, and the convent was established "quietly and lovingly in the midst of those good people, who had not forgotten Mother de Chantal, and who never called her anything but *their good lady*."

As soon as our saint received the news of the Sisters' establishment, she wrote to Mother de Chastelluz as follows: "You are now in Autun. O God! my dearest, how earnestly I entreat you to plant in that little garden the holiest and sweetest charity, the humblest simplicity, that these holy virtues may water its plants with their sacred dew, and that all who approach you may return perfumed with the odor of your virtues. I am sure that the holy M. Guyon will be a true father to you. Present him my respectful regards."[1]

M. Guyon here alluded to, and of whose eminent virtue Mother de Chantal had not lost sight when she sent her nuns to Autun, was one of the holiest priests of France in the seventeenth century. He died in the odor of sanctity, 1631, Vicar-General of Autun and Superior of the Visitation. For years he was noted for his austere and penitential life, the purity and innocence of his morals, and particularly for the supernatural and prophetic light that he drew from his close communication with Almighty God.

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[1] Letter of November 24, 1624. (Archives of the Visitation of Annecy.)

It was this same M. Guyon who, whilst making the canonical visitation of the convent, was followed by a crowd begging for his blessing and bringing the sick to be cured by his touch. "When he saw that the people had followed him even into the convent church," say the old *Mémoires*, "and that the priests could not make their way through the crowd from the sacristy to the altar, he came out himself from the sacristy, indignant and weeping, and scolded the people, telling them that he was a great sinner, and that they were wrong in believing that he could work miracles, a power to be attributed to them only who, with the dignity of apostles, have the apostolic virtues. He told them to go away, saying that it was a great punishment from Heaven for a whole population to be seen thus running after a sinner and demanding of him what was to be expected from saints only. As for himself, he added, in order not to participate in their sin, he would neither see, nor touch, nor bless them. This sharp reproof had no effect upon the people. They stood their ground, saying that by hearing his Mass they would, at least, receive his blessing, which he could not refuse them."[1]

Whilst the Order of the Visitation was thus propagating in the south and centre of France, Mother de Chantal was extending it, also, in Savoy and Lorraine. Two young ladies and a widow had projected a foundation in Évian; but before doing so they had, on the saint's invitation, spent a year at the convent in Annecy. There they were trained to the religious life and clothed with the habit, after which they set out for Évian with Mother de Chantal and Mother de Lucinge, the latter intended for Superioress of the new house. They arrived August 6, 1625. The foundation was made with the usual solemnity and the éclat which was beginning to attend the saint's every undertaking. The process of her canonization speaks of a miraculous fact that occurred on this occasion. "On returning from Évian," says Mother Favre de Charmette, "the servant of God passed through La Roche, and stopped with a person named Chatrier, who had eleven daughters and one son. On account of his veneration for the holy Mother, he begged her to bless his family, expressing his wish that some of his daughters would one day become members of her Institute. The servant of God, after looking at each separately, replied that there was none for the Visitation, but that St. Bernard would have three of them, and later on the Visitation would receive some daughters of his son, who was still very young. All has been verified, for three of his daughters joined the Bernardines, and there are now, May 7, 1722," adds Mother de Charmette, "two granddaughters of the said Chatrier in this first convent of the Visitation."[1]

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[1] *Fondation inédite d'Autun*, p. 77.

Returned from Évian, Mother de Chantal went directly to Rumilly, where one of her dearest friends, Madame de la Fléchère, had been making preparations for a foundation. She took with her some young Sisters and Mother Marie-Adrienne Fichet, whom she appointed Superioress. As Mother Fichet was of a very active and ardent temperament, our saint, on leaving, gave her the following admirable advice: "Believe me, my daughter, God has given me a particular affection for our little Rumilly, which seems like one of the dormitories of Annecy, so near are we. O my daughter, how I desire that the spirit of our blessed Father may reign here, that mild, sweet, and loving spirit! Be zealous for this, my dear daughter, I entreat you. It daily becomes more evident to me that nothing can be done with souls except by mildness, sweetness, and supporting means. Deal with our Sisters carefully, but mildly and kindly. Guide very gently these little young souls who are so good. Do not force them. Maintain your dear flock in holy joy, peace, and suavity. Assure them that they are very dear to me, as also my dear little house of Rumilly."

Our saint, having now responded to the most urgent calls, commenced preparations for a longer and more important journey—that to Lorraine. The noble and pious Marchioness d'Haraucourt wished to become the foundress of a convent of the Visitation at Pont-à-Mousson, and the princes of Lorraine had several times written to our saint to come herself and begin the new house. They would esteem themselves fortunate, they said, to have so great a servant of God in their dominions even for a short time.

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[1] *Procès de Canonisation.* Deposition of Mother de Charmette.

Mother de Chantal left Annecy April 27, 1626, accompanied by four professed Sisters, a novice, and Sister Paul-Hiéronyme Favrot, who was to be the Superioress. A remarkable example of obedience occurred at the moment of their departure. Sister Favrot had fallen sick a few days before the little colony was to leave Annecy, and Sister Bernarde-Marguerite had been chosen to take her place. The latter was already on horseback at the convent gate, about to start with the other Sisters, when Sister Favrot, who had risen to bid the saint adieu, approached the litter in which she was. "How do you feel?" asked Mother de Chantal. "Tolerably well," answered Sister Favrot. "Then get up here by me," said the saint, "and let Sister Bernarde-Marguerite get down and return to the convent." The one took her place in the litter, and the other got off her horse as coolly, sweetly, and peaceably as she had mounted, both showing that they were equally ready to remain or to depart. Their indifference was so much the more admirable as neither was ever heard to make allusion to the fact. Some one having expressed regret to Sister Bernarde-Marguerite that she had missed this long and beautiful journey, her only answer was, that the Master has servants under Him, and that He says to one: "Go," and he goes; to another: "Come," and he comes.[1]

From Annecy St. Chantal went to Saint-Claude, and experienced great consolation in revisiting the scenes of the first revelation of God's designs over her. The ladies of the place waited on her, and the Canons opened the shrine of St. Claude, that she might venerate his relics.

On leaving Saint-Claude she proceeded to Salins, over roads so rugged as to endanger life. Perceiving at one place that they were on the brink of a precipice below which rolled a torrent, she wanted to descend from her mule, but the guide calling out to her to go on, she exclaimed: "Well, then, let us go on in God's name. We are in the hands of Providence." She urged her mule forward, but the animal made a false step, lost his footing, and slipped. A cry of terror escaped from the Sisters; but the saint coolly made the sign of the cross and abandoned herself to God. The mule instantly regained his footing, and the danger was over. The muleteer exclaimed in admiration: "Had not God worked a miracle to save the Mother, we should certainly have perished." [1]

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[1] *Fondation inédite de Pont-à-Mousson,* p. 256.

Two days after, she arrived at Salins, where she was met by Madame de Château-Rouleau-d'Andelot and several other very pious ladies, who had come to receive her and enjoy her holy conversation. When Mother de Chantal and her little band were about to resume their journey, Madame d'Andelot, who was a venerable widow, very aged and very holy, knelt down before the saint to receive her blessing; but St. Chantal cast herself on her knees, and begged the same favor of her. This contest of humility lasted for some time, and was ended only by both rising and blessing each other with mutual assurances of holy and sincere affection.[2]

Two or three leagues from Salins the Sisters were met by a carriage, sent for them by the foundress, Madame d'Haraucourt. On reaching Besançon, Mother de Chantal was received with the greatest honor, the Canons and nearly all the clergy waiting upon her. The cloistered communities sent their almoners to welcome her, whilst noblemen, municipal dignitaries, and ladies of rank were in constant attendance on her. All day long two large halls were crowded with people anxious to say a word to her. As one party left another entered. "We must not stay long," they said, "that all may see the saint." [3] When she went out to Mass the crowd pressed around her to touch her habit and clip pieces from it, "which she had trouble enough to prevent." [4] Everywhere, in the streets and in the house, people insisted on getting her blessing, but this she refused to every one. "For the love of God, Sisters," she said, "let us leave this place. The people mistake. They do not know who I am." [5]

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[1] *Fondation inédite de Pont-à-Mousson*, p. 256.

[2] *Ibid.* p. 257.

[3] *Mémoires* of Mother de Chaugy, p. 200.

[4] *Fondation inédite de Pont-à-Mousson*, p. 257.

[5] *Mémoires* of Mother de Chaugy, p. 200.

On arriving at Besançon, Mother de Chantal accepted the hospitality of Madame de la Tour. Disappointed at not being able to entertain her in their palace, the Prince and Princess de Cantecroix begged her at least to hear Mass in their chapel, which she did next day. Elegant carpets and cushions had been prepared for her to kneel upon, but she refused to make use of them. "Madame," she said to the Princess, "do not ask me to use this kneeling-stool. I should be very uncomfortable on it. A religious finds her kneeling-stool everywhere. I mean the ground, the cushion used by Our Lord in the Garden of Olives." With these words she knelt down among the eight Sisters whom she had brought with her. They said the Office together, with the prescribed ceremonies, as if in their cloistered chapel. Prince de Cantecroix was charmed. "He thought he saw in these nine religious the nine choirs of angels in his chapel. Mother de Chantal was like a seraph. Her countenance glowed with celestial light."[1] Mass over, M. and Mme. de Cantecroix begged her to visit their palace, which was noted for its magnificence; but she refused, adding with wit and grace, that she could find nothing in their elegant home equal to what she saw in themselves. A moment after, however, being told that a sick domestic wanted to speak to her, she entered. The favor refused to a princess was granted to a servant, to the great admiration of the beholders. The streets resounded with the cry: "Mother de Chantal is a real saint."[2]

But a still greater honor was in store for her. The Canons assembled in Chapter and resolved to accord her a favor granted ordinarily to none but kings, namely, to expose for her the Holy Winding-Sheet. She received this favor with humility and fervor. With tears of devotion she venerated the sacred relic, kissing it over and over again, especially where the marks of the sacred wounds of the feet and hands appeared.[3]

She had still another pleasure at Besançon. She met there a servant-girl, called Madeleine-Adelaine, whom the world despised as a fool, but whom she knew and greatly loved, and of whom God was about to make use to found, despite Parliaments and princes, a convent of the Visitation at Besançon. It was now ten years since God had revealed to her this design, ten years since He had, on three consecutive nights, shown her a bloody Crucifix, to give her to understand that, in the service required of her, she would have to embrace the cross. She told the matter to her confessor, but he repulsed her. How could she, a poor girl, accomplish what the greatest lords of the province would not dare undertake? She vainly determined to give up the idea. She applied for direction to several holy and learned priests, tried to become a Carmelite, devoted herself to the service of the poor and the education of children. But tormented, disquieted, feeling that she was not where God wished her, she went, in 1620, to St. Francis de Sales and begged him to receive her into the convent of Annecy. "No, Sister Madeleine, my dear daughter," was the holy prelate's grave reply, "with God's help, some of our Sisters will one day be in your province, and you will become a religious among them." "But, my Lord," she answered, "that is impossible. M. Duloréis is all interest for the Sisters of the Third Order, and others for the Annonciades. No one is thinking of the Visitation." "Well," said the saint, "M. Duloréis will continue his efforts for the good Sisters of the Third Order, and you, my daughter, will, with God's assistance, continue yours for our Sisters, whom you will afterward join." She returned to Besançon, and resumed her mission with renewed zeal, though encountering what seemed to be insurmountable obstacles. Some assured her that God did not wish it of her, and that for such undertakings responsible persons were necessary. Others told her that she was offending God and that her rash demands would prove injurious to the Annonciades and to the Tiercelines. They heaped reproaches upon her, and treated her as a fool. Whilst things were in this state, hearing that St. Chantal was in Dijon (1622), she went to see her and related to her her history. "O my dear daughter," replied the saint, "what have you done for God that He should have chosen you for so great a work? Oh, how happy you are! Confess humbly that you are a fool, but with the folly of the Cross. Persevere in your efforts, and to all who speak against us answer that we are the least and the last servants of God; that we yield to all others save in humility and love for our littleness and lowliness. If they tell you that we have received penitent women,[1] tell them that you do not know this to be true (as it certainly is not), but that the Blessed Virgin never refused to converse with Magdalene after she had been converted from a sinner into a lover; that you think it probable that, for some good reason, we might imitate the Mother of God, since we are her daughters. When they speak to you about your condition, your want of influence and means, humble yourself and beg them to pray that you may do God's will, for then you will be great enough. Trust in God, and you will see that He will raise up some servant of His own to assist you in so good an enterprise." These words encouraged Madeleine. As soon as she returned to Besançon, she took active measures, presented a petition to the city authorities for the foundation of a convent of the Visitation, and even wrote to Their Imperial Majesties. The storm that had been gradually gathering now burst forth. Were other proofs of Madeleine's folly necessary, since she was thus beginning to expose her pride in public? The mob waited for her in the street, to hiss her as soon as she appeared. They called her foolish, proud, rash. They complained of her to her confessor, and he reproved her sharply, and refused to hear her confession unless she renounced her project. Such was her position—hooted at by the people, forsaken by her confessor, and refused absolution by other priests—when St. Chantal arrived and calmed the tempest by a single word. Madeleine-Adelaine went to cast herself at the saint's feet, taking with her from sixty to eighty young girls who wished to enter the Visitation. St. Chantal, seeing herself besieged by the little army, began to laugh graciously, and earnestly exhorted them to the love of God. Then she made them range around a large hall, that she might say a word of affection and encouragement to each. She gazed at them one by one, and penetrating by the light of God into their heart, she chose twenty-four who, she said, would be received first, and then twelve others who would have to wait awhile, but who would in the end be received. Of those thus chosen, not a single one failed to make her vows, and in the order designated. Of the remaining forty she said nothing. Among them was one who boasted of her fervor. She declared herself ready to enter at once, and that she feared nothing or no one but her parents. "My daughter," said the saint, "fear yourself." As the girl replied by a very energetic protestation of constancy, Mother de Chantal said: "When I find girls talking so much of their firmness, I strongly suspect their weakness." The event verified her prophetic words. The girl soon returned to the vanity of the world, and married.[1]

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[1] *Mémoires* of Mother de Chaugy, p. 199.

[2] *Fondation inédite de Besançon*, p. 371.

[3] *Ibid.* p. 374.

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[1] One of the accusations by which it was sought to tarnish the reputation of the Order.

This assembly was noised abroad. The opponents of the establishment feared lest Mother de Chantal would take advantage of the enthusiasm of the people and found the house. They went to the Archbishop and tried to prejudice him against the saint. One of his almoners actually called upon her and, in a long harangue, endeavored to persuade her not to attempt an establishment in Besançon. He alleged innumerable reasons against it. Mother de Chantal listened patiently to the end, and then begged him to say to the Archbishop that she owed too great respect and submission to the prelates of the Church to undertake anything in their dioceses without their sanction; but that, at the same time, she felt great compassion for the number of young girls whom she found here desirous to consecrate themselves to God, before whom she entreated His Lordship to consider their spiritual necessities. She sent him, also, the Letters of St. Francis de Sales.

Next day she left Besançon. On bidding Madeleine adieu she said: "Continue your efforts quietly. I fear the length or difficulties of this blessed undertaking will tire you out." As Madeleine protested that nothing would discourage her, the saint added: "My daughter, I must tell you that God inspires me with the thought that He wishes to be greatly served in this place by the Sisters of the Visitation. For this reason you must not grow weary of your project. Let the Sisters of the Third Order come, it is but right; but, at the same time, do not desist in your efforts, for God will bless and crown your perseverance." All turned out as she predicted. In spite of the immense obstacles that could neither exhaust nor discourage Madeleine's patience, after five years more of painful and humiliating negotiations, the foundation was effected to the glory of God and the salvation of souls.[1]

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[1] *Mémoires* of Mother de Chaugy, p. 198.—*Fondation inédite de Besançon,* p. 374.

From Besançon St. Chantal went first to Haraucourt, where Madame d'Haraucourt, foundress of the convent of Pont-à-Mousson, was waiting for her with her whole family to do her honor. She had no sooner crossed the threshold than she felt that it was not the abode of peace and charity. She was right. The Marchioness and her son-in-law, Lord de Ville, were then at law. Mother de Chantal settled the difference so satisfactorily to both that they were ever after the best of friends. The young Lord de Ville even conceived so great an affection for the saint that he prevailed upon her to call him her son. He escorted the Sisters in his own carriages to Nancy and Pont-à-Mousson, and loaded them with favors as long as he lived.

As soon as Mother de Chantal reached Nancy, the Princess de Salzbourg, sister of the Duke of Lorraine, visited her with every mark of joy and veneration, and a short time after, the Duchess of Lorraine and the Princess Claude called to pay their respects. They considered themselves fortunate, they said, to see so great a servant of God, and they assured her that, as far as they could, they would protect her Order. Archbishop de Lénoncourt, the Primate of Lorraine, also called on the same day, accompanied by a large number of ecclesiastics. Charles IV., Duke of Lorraine, sent to assure her that he looked upon and honored her as his mother. In a word, both in the city and at court she was the general topic of conversation, "and it is right," said Charles IV., "for she is the saint of our age." [2]

Despite her fear of worldly honor, she was obliged to yield to the invitation of the Duke and Duchess to visit their palace. Charles IV. received her with marks of veneration, and the nobility of the city and province, who had been assembled for the occasion, pressed into the spacious halls, anxious to see the wonderful woman who, whilst still young, had renounced an ancient name and large wealth, and who was now so courageously bearing the heavy burden of a rising Order. After conversing with Their Highnesses, she was about to withdraw, when her eyes fell suddenly upon a young lady of about twenty years of age. Her beauty and modesty attracted Mother de Chantal, and, approaching her, she said with a smile: "My daughter, if you find a better spouse than Our Lord, I advise you to accept him." Now, at that very moment, and indeed for over a year, this young girl had been hesitating between the desire to remain in the world, which delighted her, and that of entering the cloister, which she dreaded. The words of the saint were to her a revelation of the will of God; and, a few months later, it was noised throughout the court that Mademoiselle d'Auvaines, maid of honor to the Duchess de Vaudemont, had taken the veil at the Visitation. The Duke and Duchess, with their whole court, assisted at the ceremony.[1]

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[1] *Fondation inédite de Besançon*, p. 374.

[2] *Fondation inédite de Pont-à-Mousson*, p. 257.—*Mémoires* of Mother de Chaugy, p. 201.

Preceded by the rumor of these triumphs, St. Chantal reached Pont-à-Mousson, and there established with the customary formalities a convent of her Order. His Eminence, Cardinal de Lorraine, presided at the ceremony, which was attended by the nobility of the environs and a large concourse of people.

A very great consolation was awaiting Mother de Chantal at Pont-à-Mousson. During her stay in that city, she became acquainted with a holy priest who, connected with the greatest events of the day, the adviser of kings, the Founder of one Religious Order, the reformer of another, might have raised himself to the highest positions, but who, thirsting for humiliations, was living at a poor village church, hidden from the eyes of the world, detached, mortified, poorer than the poorest of his parish, and yet bearing upon his emaciated features an impress of saintly beauty, the remembrance of which is still fresh in Lorraine. St. Chantal was so struck at it, that she used to say: "One glance at good Father Fourrier would be sufficient to convince even a stranger of his sanctity." These two great souls had several interviews, in which they zealously urged each other to hasten forward on the road to perfection.

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[1] *Vies de quelques Supérieures.* Annecy, 1693, 1 vol. 4to, p. 403.

St. Chantal remained nearly four months in Pont-à-Mousson, during which she commenced to build a convent and received several postulants. After settling the principal affairs relating to the foundation, she appointed Sister Paul-Hièronyme Favrot Superioress, and hastened to withdraw from the honor and veneration of which she was the object. She used afterward to say that the happiest days of her life were those upon which she left Pont-à-Mousson, Nancy, and Besançon, "for," she said, "I was not known in those cities. They formed a very mistaken idea of me."

She little suspected what was awaiting her in the centre and south of France. She was returning to greater applause, honor, and veneration than she had left. For some years longer we shall behold her suffering from such marks of honor, weeping when pieces were clipped from her habit, hastening from cities in which ovations were decreed her, and saying, as when she left Besançon: "Let us go hence, for these people do not know me." But later and as she increases in age, humility, and sanctity, when she shall have acquired the highest degree of death to self, we shall see her yielding her hands to all who wish to kiss them, without a word of remonstrance, without even suspecting that such honors were meant for *her*. In like manner, when St. Francis of Assisi began his mission through the world, and the stigmata upon his hands and feet drew crowds after him, we see him blushing and hiding his hands; and if any one cut off a piece of his habit or cord, tears flowed from his eyes, and he would say: "These people are fools thus to honor a sinner." But later, toward the end of his life, he used himself to extend his pierced hands to the lips of pilgrims, and when a young brother expressed his surprise, the saint replied: "What! brother, do you for a moment imagine that these people are thinking of me?" Ah! self-love was thoroughly extinguished in him.

CHAPTER VI.

JOURNEY TO ORLÉANS AND PARIS.—VIRTUE PRACTISED IN THE FIRST DAYS OF THE ORDER.

1626—1630.

St. Chantal's term of government at Annecy had expired. Elected, or rather re-elected, on May 27, 1623, her authority as Superioress ended at the Ascension of 1626. As she was at that date very much occupied with the foundation of Pont-à-Mousson, and could not possibly return to Annecy for the election, she sent her resignation to the community from Pont-à-Mousson. It was accompanied by a letter in which she reminded the Sisters of her determination to submit to the Rule and, consequently, not to accept a re-election. The Sisters, not forgetful of her firmness in 1623, and understanding that it would be useless to insist, accepted her resignation, and elected in her place Mother de Châtel. As soon as the Sisters of Orléans learned that their holy Foundress was no longer Superioress at Annecy, they elected her for their own community, and wrote, begging her to come to them as soon as possible. Unfortunately for them, St. Francis de Sales had decided that, to leave Mother de Chantal more at liberty to direct the general affairs of the Order, she should not undertake the particular government of any of the convents, except that of Annecy, the source and model of all the others. She could not, therefore, accept the charge imposed upon her by the election in Orléans; but, in order to give all the Superioresses of the Order an example of the obedience due to the will of communities that elect them, she determined to go to Orléans. After resting awhile at Annecy and attending to some matters of which we shall speak later, she started for Orléans, taking with her three or four Sisters for a foundation at Crémieux, which she was to make on her way.

Just as she was leaving the convent, M. de Granieux, a gentleman of Grenoble who had been suffering violent headaches for years, stepped up to the door. He had come to seek health at the tomb of St. Francis de Sales. On perceiving Mother de Chantal, whom he had long known, he approached to speak to her. The saint graciously returned his salutation, and whilst bidding him good-day laid her hand upon his head. He was instantly cured. "I came to seek health from the holy man" (*le saint*), he said joyfully, "and I have received it from the holy woman" (*la sainte*). [1]

From Annecy Mother de Chantal proceeded at once to Crémieux, taking with her Sister Marie-Adrienne Fichet for Superioress and three professed Sisters. Crémieux was a poor little place, affording few spiritual succors. The foundation could not have succeeded without the support of the two noble and pious ladies de Saint-Julien and de Mépieu, both of whom were deservedly much beloved by our saint. They had taken the greatest trouble to obtain the necessary permissions and prepare everything for the foundation, for all which Mother de Chantal thanked them after the manner of saints. The night of the foundation-day, after all had retired to rest, the house occupied by the two noble foundresses caught fire. A high wind fanned and spread the flames. The loud neighing of the terrified horses shut up in the stable carried the alarm far and wide. The people ran to Mother de Chantal; "and," says the old *Mémoire*, "it was truly miraculous and acknowledged as such by all. As soon as the holy Mother knelt down the fire went out, as if a deluge of water had fallen upon it. The ceilings, which had commenced to give way, remained in their curved position, and straw was found half-burned. To give an idea of how great was the conflagration which the Supreme Power thus extinguished, it will be sufficient to say that large carriage horses, worth a hundred crowns a piece, were found dead under the racks and entirely roasted. Every one exclaimed: '*A miracle! a miracle!*' But the humble servant of God told them that the favor was due to the intercession of our holy Founder, whom she had promised that Lady de Mépieu would offer at his tomb a tiny silver house. The noble lady fulfilled the promise; but neither this nor any other reason alleged by the humble Mother prevented the people from attributing the miracle to her, and she has ever since been honored with particular devotion in the city of Crémieux."[1]

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[1] *Mémoires* of Mother de Chaugy, p. 217.

From Crémieux, where she left Mother Adrienne Fichet Superioress of the new convent, Mother de Chantal resumed her route to Orléans. On the way she stopped at Paray-le-Monial, where, about a month before, under the protection of the Marquis de Ragny, Governor of Charolais, a convent had been founded by a colony from Lyons. The saint's humility shone forth at the moment of crossing the threshold of the convent. Madame de Toulongeon, her daughter, who had brought her to Paray in her own carriage, had permission to enter the convent. When the door was opened she prepared to follow her mother; but the latter paused, and turning to her, said: "Françoise, wait until I see whether the Mother here will consent to your entering her convent." Then calling for the Superioress, who was the young Sister Marguerite-Elisabeth Souzion, she said: "My dear Sister, here is my daughter, who has permission to enter, but I do not wish her to make use of it without your consent." All present were moved even to tears at seeing the Foundress assuming so little authority, and exhibiting so much humility toward her religious. They regarded it as an unmistakable proof of sanctity.[2]

After a stay of three days, during which she encouraged the Sisters, still few in number, very poor and badly lodged, to bear patiently their hardships, she departed for Autun, her entry into which was a triumph. During her whole stay she could not appear on the street without being surrounded by a crowd anxious to see her. The children, above all, with importunity peculiar to their age, made their way through the throng to receive the caresses with which she never failed to welcome them. They would then run

[1] *Mémoires* of Mother de Chaugy, p. 218.

[2] *Fondation inédite de Paray-le-Monial*, p. 282.

off, full of joy, crying out that they had seen the saint. One day in particular she was besieged by a little army of them. They ran round and round her, full of curiosity. The saint's companions wished to drive them away; but she would not allow it. It was but right, she said, to gratify the innocent little creatures. She raised her veil, that they might see her face, and caressed them with her usual kindness.

The curiosity of the children of Autun we shall constantly meet as we advance in our history. Wherever she goes, Mother de Chantal will be forced to raise her veil to show her grave and serious countenance, so kind, so full of humility and fervor. Here lies, in fact, the charm of the saints and a part of their power. Their sanctity is not confined to their interior; it shows itself upon their exterior. Jesus Christ, who dwells in their heart, shows Himself on their countenance and stamps upon their brow that supernatural beauty which ravishes the beholder.

The religious of Autun called several times on Mother de Chantal; some, that they might have it to say that they had seen a saint, and others, to ask her advice. The Rector of the Jesuits took with him for this purpose all the young prefects of his college; but Mother de Chantal was so confused that she could stammer only some words of humility. The same happened when the Father-Guardian of the Capuchins praised her in the presence of others for the part she had taken in founding the Institute. The color rose to her face, and she merely remarked that God sometimes employs the vilest instruments, but as for herself, she could not think she had been of any service in so holy a work.

If such was the veneration Mother de Chantal inspired outside her convents, what shall we say of that felt for her by her spiritual daughters? The Sisters hung around her like children, and eagerly gathered up her least words to write them down in blank-books that are still preserved. On her arrival at the convent of Autun she found a novice who had been rejected by the Chapter, and who, distressed at the decision, was making the most earnest promises for the future. Mother de Chastelluz, touched by her tears and inclined to prolong her trial, consulted Mother de Chantal.

"What! my daughter," said the saint, "do you make so little account of the deliberations of the Chapter over which the Holy Ghost presides? We must never act against its decisions. Send this novice away, since it has been thus decided. It is well concluded, too, for it seems to me the girl is called elsewhere."

They consulted her, also, about a young girl of fourteen, who was very anxious to receive the veil, and for whom they thought of asking a dispensation on the point of age. But she absolutely refused through respect for the Rules, which, she said, must never be infringed, especially on the point of age, which she considered very important. She added that the postulant's fervor would not last long, and that she would never be a religious. The penetration and experience of the saint were not deceived. Her words were verified, although, at the moment, there was nothing to support her assertion.

Up to this time the Sisters of Autun occupied a rented house. They now begged their holy Foundress to choose a site for their convent, for they felt that her choice could not fail to be a happy one. They were not disappointed. The spot selected by Mother de Chantal offered them not only peace and solitude, but soon became the theatre of wonders. The walls of the convent had scarcely commenced to rise, when music the most delightful was heard around. Humanly speaking, it was inexplicable. "One would have said that heavenly musicians had assembled on the spot to sing the praises of God and dedicate to Him this new dwelling of divine love and glory. Later, when the Sisters had taken possession of the building, a supernatural voice was several times heard chanting the Office with them. It sang an octave higher than the choir, though without causing discord, and excited in the soul of all who heard it so sweet a consciousness of God's presence, that they felt themselves in paradise; but as soon as they attempted to enjoy the pleasure of listening to the charming voice, it ceased. It was heard principally on great festivals and during the anthems of Our Lady."[1]

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[1] *Fondation inédite d'Autun*, p. 230.

On leaving Autun Mother de Chantal proceeded directly to Orléans. The joy with which she was received was changed into sadness when she declared that she could not accept the charge offered her. She remained, however, three months in the convent, and condescended during that period to perform all the functions of Superioress with the most edifying exactitude, meekness, and humility. At the end of that time she had the Chapter assembled for the election of another Superioress, and then left the house, having given to the whole Order an example of obedience, and taught Superioresses that nothing ought to prevent them from going to the convents in which they have been elected.

From Orléans she went to Paris, whither she was led by news received from that city, and particularly by pressing letters from Mother de Beaumont. This holy religious, who had so ably governed the first convent of Paris, and who, with little or no resources but her wonderful confidence in God, had just succeeded in founding a second house in the same city, was, at this time, undergoing a bitter persecution. The truth was, her enemies could not pardon her success. The praise of so many distinguished persons, but particularly the affection shown her by the two Queens, Marie de Médicis and Anne of Austria, who used to spend hours with her in the parlor and sometimes in her cell, had excited the most violent jealousy. The storm was so great that it was feared at times it would overturn the convent.

St. Chantal hastened to the scene. An incident related in the old *Mémoires* shows in what veneration she was held even at that epoch. As soon as her arrival became known, visitors crowded to see her in such numbers that the Portress, Sister Anne-Marie Verdelot, was soon overcome with fatigue. On the second day her limbs swelled and her feet commenced to bleed; on the third day she could hardly walk and had to keep her bed.

It was hoped that the mere presence of the saint would appease Mother de Beaumont's enemies. But since this did not result, the servant of God, judging it better, under the circumstances, to yield rather than resist, directed Mother de Beaumont to leave Paris and return to Annecy. The virtue of the humble Superioress shone brightly upon this trying occasion.[1] She immediately commenced preparations for departure, consoled the Sisters grieving at the thought of losing her, and so humbly and nobly declined Anne of Austria's offer to prevent her removal, that this great Queen, on leaving the convent, declared that she had just been talking to a saint. In the midst of these beautiful acts of fortitude and obedience, a few words that escaped her give an insight into the delicacy of her conscience. As she was consoling one of the Sisters, she happened to say, almost inadvertently, that she had been sacrificed to the passions of others, words for which her conscience at once reproached her. She sent for her confessor, St. Vincent de Paul, and learned from that great director, who knew not how to flatter his penitents, that God had permitted her to fall into this fault to check the secret pride her fortitude might have inspired.[2]

The prompt and energetic action of Mother de Chantal, the perfect obedience of Mother de Beaumont, and the arrival of Mother Favre, who was to replace the deposed Superioress, calmed the storm; and, as often happens on such occasions, nothing but praise was now heard where bitter criticism had before resounded. After remaining some time in the second convent, the holy Foundress visited the first, then governed by Mother Marie-Hélène Lhuillier, and, during the rest of her stay in Paris, she passed alternately from one house to the other, without making either her definitive stopping-place. Under her guidance they attained a degree of prosperity equal to their fervor.

The letters Mother de Chantal received in Paris filled her with joy. Several foundations, lately commenced in various parts of France, were happily succeeding. They were that of Embrun, founded by a few Sisters from Grenoble (April 25, 1625); that of Blois, commenced by some Sisters from Nevers, who had, at first, met with great difficulties, but which were soon removed by the prudence and energy of Mother de Monthouz (November 4, 1625); and that of Bourg-en-Bresse, founded from Annecy (March 19, 1627). The last-named foundation was on the point of falling through, when it was saved by a bold act of confidence in God. Mother Favre, the Superioress, was summoned by a fickle and faithless benefactress to return the thirty thousand francs she had given her to pay for the house, and which had already been disposed of for that purpose. Mother Favre did not hesitate. She borrowed the sum and gave it back to the donor. This act excited such enthusiasm that postulants flocked to the new convent from all directions. Mother de Chantal received favorable accounts also from Dol, in Brittany, which foundation (October 21, 1627) was due to the fervent prayers of the holy Bishop de Révol, one of St. Francis de Sales' friends and a great admirer of Mother de Chantal. A month later, November 21, 1627, a second convent of the Visitation had been founded in Lyons, on the heights of Fourvières. This, too, was succeeding. Although the house they had in view for this foundation well deserved, as the old *Mémoires* say, its name of *Antiquailles*,[1] Mother de Blonay gladly purchased it, as it was beautifully situated upon the very summit of the heights, with a fine open view on all sides, and was, moreover, a spot sanctified by the blood of martyrs, full of the holy memories of SS. Pothinus and Irenæus. There she established the second convent of Lyons (November 21, 1627). This was the thirtieth house of the Order. St. Francis de Sales had, in twelve years, founded thirteen; and in five years St. Chantal had seen the seventeen others arise.

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[1] Letter of Mother de Chantal to Mother Favre, March 30, 1628.

[2] *Vies de quelques Supérieures*, p. 94.

But what rejoiced Mother de Chantal and consoled the Church far more than the rapid propagation of the Order was the great virtue everywhere flourishing in the houses of the Visitation. Let us pause a moment to consider. The first years of a Religious Order are like the first days of the novitiate. They possess the freshness, the enthusiasm, that ineffable *something* of youth, not found in later years. After the detailed accounts we have given of the Rules and spirit of the Visitation, it will be a pleasing task to gaze a moment on the virtues everywhere blooming under their practice.

We remember that St. Francis de Sales, though renouncing corporal macerations, still held to the crucifixion of nature and death to self, which are the bases of the religious life, and that he substituted the mortification of the spirit for that of the flesh. His idea was admirably understood. From the very beginning obedience was practised with wonderful ardor by his spiritual daughters. The first Sisters of the Visitation were so pliant and submissive that, according to St. Chantal's own expression, "one could twist them like handkerchiefs." They could be taken or left, sent to the ends of the earth, ordered here and there, without drawing from them a refusal or a complaint. Mother Favre, whom we have seen so independent in the world, who thought widows alone happy because free from every bond, had become in the cloister a model of obedience. Called by St. Chantal from Montferrand to Dijon, but so esteemed by the authorities and people that they refused her a vehicle and guarded the city gates to prevent her departure, she declared that she would set out on foot, when they least suspected, and, if necessary, disguised as a beggar. She kept her word. She made her escape by night, got into the first cart that she met, and hastened to Dijon, to comply with the orders she had received.[1] When the most distinguished persons tried to detain Mother Marguerite Michel in Belley, she replied: "Rather than remain against the will of my Superiors, I would attempt, lame as I am, to scale the walls of the city."[2] Mother de Bréchard was very sick in bed in Moulins when she received a letter from St. Chantal asking for four Sisters, the very ones upon whom she relied to supply for her in her sickness. She did not hesitate. "Were our Mother to write to me to send her one of my eyes or one of my arms, I would pluck out the one and have the other cut off, to show her my humble obedience."[3] In vain did they call a council of physicians, who declared that if Mother de Châtel attempted to leave Grenoble, her eye inflamed as it was, she would run the risk of losing it. Her smiling reply was: "It matters very little whether I have two eyes or only one; but it is of great importance to be obedient," and she set out on her journey.[1] On her way to Crémieux, whither she was going by St. Chantal's order, Mother Adrienne Fichet fell from her horse, and lay for two hours among the snow-covered mountains, in a fainting condition and badly injured. Her companions wished her to return, assuring her that she would proceed but at the peril of her life. "Oh," said she, "obedience has spoken! Let us go on." And at the cost of unspeakable fatigue, she reached Crémieux on the day marked by St. Chantal.[2] But all these examples pale before the words that fell one day from Mother de Blonay's lips. Some one blaming her for having allowed the body of St. Francis de Sales to be removed from Lyons to Annecy, she said: "Ah! not only would I give up the body of my holy Founder at the voice of my venerable Mother, but I would even deprive myself of the living body of my Lord Jesus Christ, had it been in my possession." [3] Thus was obedience understood in the Visitation.

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[1] *Antiquity.*

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[1] *Vies des premières Mères*, vol. i. p. 38.

[2] *Vies de quelques Supérieures*, p. 135.

[3] *Vies des premières Mères*, p. 214.

The following example will also be admired, even after the above. One day, when the community at Annecy had gone to the parlor to see M. Olier, Founder of the Seminary of Saint-Sulpice, the Superioress, wishing him to judge of the perfect obedience of Sister Anne-Marie Rosset, told her to draw near the grate and sing. Although possessing an exceedingly disagreeable voice, the holy nun, who was then very old, obeyed without a word, and continued to sing until the Superioress told her to stop. M. Olier, a good judge in such cases, said: "Fifty miracles would not have so firmly convinced me of the holiness of this Sister as this one act of heroic submission." [4]

Mother de Chantal's heart leaped with joy on seeing obedience practised so courageously in the Order. "God has favored us," she wrote, "by giving such a turn of mind to the novices here that, if I wished them above the clouds, they would soar above them; or at the centre of the earth, they would bury themselves in it. I say the same of our professed Sisters also. It is on this account that I call them good religious; and I look upon our Sisters of Annecy as treasures."[1]

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[1] *Fondation inédite de Grenoble.*

[2] *Fondation inédite de Crémieux.*

[3] *Vie de la Mère de Blonay*, by Charles-Auguste, p. 100.

[4] *Vies de quelques Supérieures*, p. 31.

When self-will is of so little account, to what can the soul hold? Consequently, there was seen in the Sisters absolute detachment from everything human. Poverty in the beginning was extreme. They were often in want of the necessaries of life; but nothing could impair the holy joy of the Sisters. They strove among themselves as to who should wear the oldest habit, who should eat the scraps at table, who should do without her dinner that others might satisfy their hunger. Nothing, above all, could shake their imperturbable confidence in Divine Providence. They had left all for God, then God would provide for them. It was thus they reasoned. And God did, indeed, provide for them with charming care and most delicate attention.[2]

One day whilst Mother de la Roche was Superioress in Orléans, the Sister Procuratrix notified her that they were in want of both flour and money. "My daughter," was the reply, "give your blessing to the little flour remaining, and trust in God." The Sister did not do as she had been told. But next day her conscience reproached her, and she told her fault in the refectory. "My daughter," said Mother de la Roche to her, "the community will go do what you have omitted;" and rising, followed by all the Sisters, she went to the granary. After a long prayer, she ordered them all together to bless the flour. From that day the little heap of flour, though daily used, remained undiminished.[3] Another Superioress went one day, in great haste, to get some change from the money-box for an urgent necessity, and found but one sou. The Sisters could not help smiling at her disappointment. They asked her jestingly whether the Angel Raphael would not make up the sum. The Mother, nothing disconcerted, raised her eyes to heaven, "as if," say the old *Mémoires*, "to arouse sweet Providence." At that moment a knock was heard at the door, and some one handed in one hundred louis d'or. "Daughters of little faith," exclaimed the Superioress, "are you now convinced of God's fidelity to His promises?"[1]

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[1] Edition Migne, p. 1237.

[2] We shall here remind the reader that the facts we are about to relate are mentioned in contemporary works composed from notes furnished by the convents in which they occurred, and all revised and corrected by St. Chantal herself, who was too great a saint and too sensible a woman to tolerate the recital of fables. Many of them, of course, cannot properly be called miracles, that is, deviations from the laws of nature. They are of the number of those *lucky chances* in which the Christian eye *evidently* discerns the hand of God.

[3] *Vies des premières Mères*, vol. i. p. 463.

Scenes as charming were constantly recurring. The Sisters of Crémieux had nothing to eat. Suddenly the door-bell rang. A good woman had brought, in her apron, a beautiful white loaf for each Sister.[2]

At Nevers, they had been vainly persuading the owner to sell them his little garden, which was next their own. The Superioress set the Sisters to praying, three by three, telling them that they should not stop until God answered their prayer. Before the end of the novena the owner of the garden called to negotiate the sale.[3] Poverty was so great at Moulins that one day they had not even a loaf in the house. Mother de Chastelluz sent the Sisters to pray. They had not finished when some one brought to the convent a large sum of money, a present from a nobleman of a distant province, whose name they had never before heard.[4]

One day, whilst building the chapel in Annecy, Mother de Blonay found herself without money. She was told that a poor deformed peasant wanted to see her. "My name is François Esseve," said he, "and I heard up in the forest that you were building a church in which the body of my holy patron, François de Sales, is always to repose. He confirmed me when he made the visitation in Chablais, where I live, and I have come to bring you my alms." Then he knelt down and handed her ten small pieces of money, which he had made, he said, by gathering benzoin from the trees. By giving them to the church, he continued, he

[1] *Les Serviteurs de Dieu*, by Léon Aubineau, p. 311.

[2] *Fondation inédite de Crémieux.*

[3] *Fondation inédite de Nevers.*

[4] *Vies de quelques Supérieures*, p. 259.

would have to beg the rest of his life, but that, when sick and unable to do anything, he would find many to assist him, and that, besides, he had one good friend. Mother de Blonay asked him who this friend was. "Every one receives benefits from Him," was the answer, "but few know Him. His name is Jesus Christ. Whoever trusts in Him and possesses His friendship will never want for anything. He plays a love-game with souls. Though having no need of anything, He tries to win the game that they may be obliged to make Him presents; but the present He prefers is our heart, and He accepts no other."[1]

This interposition of Divine Providence was seen in the smallest circumstances. Mother de Châtel was once sent to prepare some broth for a sick man. "Ah! my God," she said, "this poor creature will have to wait a long while for his broth, for there is no fire here, and I do not know where to get any." As she spoke the fire kindled of itself. On seeing this Mother de Châtel cast herself on her knees, exclaiming with the simplicity peculiar to her: "Indeed, Lord, I know that Thou art here, but I did not know that it was to make Thyself the scullion." And it seemed to her that she heard Our Lord replying: "In heaven I serve the blessed at My table, and I am ready also to serve in the kitchen those that love Me on earth."[2]

The more attentive Divine Providence was to succor the daughters of St. Chantal in their poverty, the more dear that poverty became to them, and the more did they endeavor to remain poor. Their convents possessed very little, but that little the first Mothers were always ready to resign rather than go to law with any one. We have seen St. Francis de Sales returning all the property of Madame de Bonnivars, whose heirs contested the rights of the convent of Annecy. "God forbid," said the holy Bishop, "that my little doves should dispute with the thrifty ants of this world." Following his example, St. Chantal refused to accept a large legacy left for the foundation of Moulins, because she would have been obliged to go to law to obtain it.[3]

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[1] *Vie de la Mère de Blonay*, p. 204.

[2] *Les premières Mères*, vol. i. p. 310.

[3] *Fondation inédite d'Annecy.*

Mother Favre [1] and Mother de Monthouz [2] did the same, preferring to return large sums of money rather than engage in a lawsuit. We have twenty similar instances.

Penance and sacrifice united with poverty and obedience to destroy the life of nature in St. Chantal's religious. The Visitation was not, indeed, the home of those frightful austerities that form the glory of Carmel. The Rules and the end of the Institute would not have allowed that. But the Visitation lived on sacrifice, and the great maxim, "Ask for nothing, refuse nothing," practised with heroism, tamed nature more completely than haircloth and disciplines. At Lyons, the good Sister Marie Trunel fell one day on the stairs, and seriously injured herself. Without saying a word of the accident, she went on with her duties as usual, until Mother de Chantal, perceiving that she limped and appeared to be in pain, questioned her. "Alas!" was the reply, "clumsy creature that I am, I fell as I was going upstairs, and hurt my side a little." On examination it was found that she had broken three of her ribs.[3] For five years Mother de Martignat, who had lived in such grandeur and admired by the world, slept in an attic open to the winds and under a roof through whose chinks came equally the snow, the rain, and the sun. When the Sisters told her that she would burn up there in summer and freeze in winter, she responded, with a smile: "No, no! There is no queen on earth better off in her palace than I in my little corner." The mortification practised by her in that little cell would never have been known had not the Sister Procuratrix of the convent entered by chance one winter day, and found hanging from the roof over Mother de Martignat's bed "long icicles, one of which she carried off to show to St. Chantal." [4]

Nothing cost those generous souls; even the most obscure among them rose to acts of heroism that the saints have never surpassed. One day Sister Gabrielle Bally, whilst combing a poor little boy whose head was covered with the itch and vermin, felt her stomach revolt; but remembering that perfection consists in conquering rebellious nature, she said: "O my Jesus! I'll teach my perverse nature not to shrink from this poor child's head," and, taking a handful of the vermin, exclaiming, "O incorrigible flesh, you shall swallow this vermin as if it were fragrant anise-seed!" she bravely swallowed it.[1]

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[1] *Fondation inédite de Moulins.* [2] *Id. de Bourg-en-Bresse.*

[3] *Vie de la Sœur Marie Trunel*, called in the world Madame d'Auxerre, MS. p. 18.

[4] *Les premières Mères*, vol. ii. p. 185.

In souls thus dead to self, could divine love fail to reign? They lived in close and constant union with God, and according to Mother de Chantal, almost all of them were raised to the prayer of quiet. Many received still greater graces; ecstasies and raptures of the highest order were not rare among them. The good Out-Sister, Anne-Jacqueline Coste, had the gift of holy tears. She could not go before the Blessed Sacrament without shedding them so abundantly, that Mother de Châtel, who used to watch her from a retired corner, was excited not only to admiration, but also to holy jealousy.[2] The young Sister Marie-Aimée de Rabutin seemed to know but one of the mysteries of Christianity. This was the spirit of sacrifice and immolation that consumed the heart of Jesus Christ as Victim for our sins. She was so deeply impressed by it, that as soon as her thoughts turned that way her countenance began to sparkle. Day and night she sighed and longed to become herself a victim. One day, this attraction urging her more powerfully than usual, she knelt down and offered herself as a victim to God's irritated justice. But so many sufferings and infirmities came upon her that, without repenting of her offering, and in her humility not even daring to believe that it had been accepted, she warned the young Sisters never to make such petitions, but to abandon themselves purely and simply to the good pleasure of God.[3]

Mother Françoise de la Fléchère was powerfully drawn to holy love. She thought but of abjection and ignominy. One year during her retreat, she offered herself to Jesus Christ to share with Him the folly of the Cross and to pass for a fool in the eyes of creatures. The sacrifices of this young Sister enraptured St. Chantal herself. "Let Sister Françoise go as God conducts her," she said. "I assure you she is walking in the rapture of love. I say not merely in the simple fervor of love," she added, laying stress upon her words, "but I say in the vehemence, in the madness of holy love." [1]

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[1] *Vies des premières Mères*, vol. ii. p. 121.

[2] *Id.* p. 369.

[3] *Vies de quelques Supérieures*, p. 321.

During the first retreat made by Mother Anne-Marie Rosset, at Annecy, before entering the novitiate, St. Francis de Sales heard her confession. After giving her absolution, the holy Bishop said to her: "And now, daughter, shall we not love God above all things?" But she made no answer. She was so suddenly seized by the delightful idea of infinite love that she lost the power of speech. The saint, perceiving that she was in ecstasy, called the Sisters. They found her speechless, pulseless, wholly unconscious. "Carry her to her cell," said St. Francis de Sales, "and leave her in silence, that the Spirit of God may finish His work; but be sure to catch what she will say when she comes to herself." They obeyed, and the first words of the holy young postulant were: "Ah! do I love God? Is there in heaven, on earth, and in hell a creature that can doubt it?" From that time her life was one continued elevation of her soul to God, a succession of ecstasies, raptures, and prophecies, with the deepest humility for its touchstone and the most perfect obedience for its security.[2]

When Mother de Bréchard received Holy Communion she became almost unconscious through the ardor of the love that consumed her. Often during Mass she was rapt in ecstasy. The first time this happened, anxious to hide the state to which love had reduced her, she made a violent effort to rise, but she could not stand. The Sisters laid her on a bed and, thinking it was a fainting spell, were about to apply remedies. Fortunately Mother de Châtel entered just then, and pointing to Mother de Bréchard's resplendent countenance, exclaimed: "Ah, happy sickness! Take care how you try to cure it! May it prove incurable!" She then bade them leave the room, and let this well-beloved enjoy her Lord in peace.[1]

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[1] *Vies de quelques Supérieures*, p. 370.

[2] *Id.* p. 19.

Mother de Châtel herself was not less favored. Her special gift was a wonderful familiarity with God. She conversed incessantly with Him as with the dearest friend; and, although sweetness was the characteristic of the caresses she received, with such vehemence did divine love sometimes overwhelm her that, even in the depth of winter, she was obliged to open her window to moderate the flame that consumed her.[2]

"My daughter," St. Chantal used to say to her, "make good use of the presence of your Spouse, for the day will come when you will seek Him and not find Him." "What!" responded Mother de Châtel, "I shall seek my God, and find Him not? Truly, if any one else than my Mother had told me that I would not believe it." But she was forced to believe it when to the caresses of holy love suddenly succeeded darkness, dryness, and apparent abandonment. She knew not where to turn. "O most holy Virgin," she said one day with her usual familiarity and simplicity, "allow me to tell you that, if your Beloved had left you, you would wish Him to be brought back to you. You were afflicted at having lost Him for three days, and I have been seeking Him so long without hearing anything of Him. Now, most holy Virgin, you constantly hold this dear Love on your bosom; but I must make you experience, figuratively at least, what it is to be separated from Him." With these words she took her scissors and cut from the picture the Infant Jesus whom the Blessed Virgin was holding in her arms. "My sweet Mother," she continued, "pardon me for taking your Son. You have forced me to do so, since you would not give Him to me." At that moment she was seized with so sweet a feeling of compassion at sight of the Mother without the Son, that, commencing to weep, she said: "O holy Mother, I have not the courage to leave you longer without your Child," and she restored the picture of the Infant Jesus to the place from which she had cut it. She had scarcely finished when the Blessed Virgin appeared to her, as formerly to St. Antony of Padua, and placed the Infant Jesus in her arms.[1]

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[1] *Vies des premières Mères,* vol. i. p. 170.

[2] *Id.* p. 400.

Mother Favre knew nothing of these supernatural favors. Always in darkness and interior trouble, her eyes swimming in tears, her face pale and emaciated, her lips uttered but these words: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" But in the midst of her anguish this "great daughter," as St. Francis de Sales had surnamed her, was as tranquil as the fish that live in peace in the midst of the waves and billows. Wishing to testify to God her perfect submission and the extent of her devotedness, she vowed never wilfully to dwell on any thought but of God or tending to God. Admirable vow, worthy of being classed among the most sublime, of being placed in almost the same rank as that which has rendered St. Teresa and St. Chantal celebrated.[2]

How shall we depict for our readers the ardent love that consumed Mother de la Roche? One day during recreation she was suddenly surrounded by a heavenly odor so sweet that, unable to support its delights, she rose and hurried into the assembly-room, which was near. There, almost fainting from the violence of divine love, she fell upon a chair. Her countenance was so resplendent that the Sisters could scarcely gaze upon it. They carried her to her cell, where the heavenly odor continued so strong, so delicious, that they lingered long, unable to do anything but enjoy its sweetness.[3] Another time when in retreat, the Assistant, happening to enter her cell, found her kneeling, her arms extended in the form of a cross, her face luminous and bathed in tears. Not daring to distract her at such a moment or interrupt her mysterious union with God, the Assistant left noiselessly. At the end of half an hour she returned to find her in the same state, immovable, her arms in the form of a cross, her eyes swimming in tears, talking aloud, her countenance more beautiful and radiant than before. Transported at the spectacle, she respectfully kissed Mother de la Roche's habit, and then, perceiving that her presence was still unnoticed, sat down at the table, took a pen, and recorded the words that fell from her lips as freely as her tears.[1]

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[1] *Vies des premières Mères,* vol. i. p. 320.

[2] *Id.* p. 25.

[3] *Id.* p. 454.

The humility of these first Mothers of the Visitation equalled their love. Returned from ecstasy, Mother de la Roche forbade the Sister Assistant ever to say a word about it. The paper containing the account of it having fallen into her hands, she blushed, and threw it into the fire.[2] When Mother de Blonay was returning from ecstasy, her embarrassment used to amuse the Sisters. She knew not where to hide from their observation, and the least allusion to it made her blush.[3] As to Mother de Bréchard, she threw into her acts of humility the same energetic ardor as into everything else. Having found two portraits of herself, taken without her knowledge, she was so confused that, with one stroke, she split the canvas of one. Fearing the other would meet the same fate, the Sisters hid it away from her. But after a diligent search, she found it, and threw it into the sink. Then returning in triumph to the Sisters, she told them that she had put it where the unworthy original deserved to be.[4] One day, whilst before the Blessed Sacrament, it occurred to Mother de Châtel to examine her heart as to whether it still clung to anything. She thought she had, indeed, given up everything (it was in the early part of her religious life), when she heard a voice: "And if they named thee Superioress, wouldst thou be indifferent?" She knew not at first what to answer. She trembled from head to foot. But, desirous of no reserve, she offered herself to God to do with her what He wished. The violence she did herself, however, was such that she was bedewed with a cold sweat, her eyes filled with tears, and she actually fainted.[5]

When charges are undertaken in such dispositions, it is easy to conjecture how they will be resigned. We have seen Mother de Beaumont leaving Paris, obedient and humble, without a word of complaint. Scarcely arrived at Annecy, she entreated Mother de Chantal to allow her to return to the novitiate.[1] Soon after, Mother de la Roche made the same request. Although times were difficult just then, though foundations were being called for on all sides, although Mothers de Beaumont and de la Roche had already been Superioresses and Foundresses, St. Chantal did not hesitate to grant their petition. She knew that to bury her daughters in humility was to bury them in divine love.

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[1] *Vies des premières Mères,* vol. i. p. 474.

[2] *Id.* p. 475.

[3] *Vie de la Mère de Blonay,* by Charles-Auguste de Sales.

[4] *Vies des premières Mères,* vol. i. p. 196.

[5] *Id.* p. 324.

Charity and the tenderest union among all the Sisters perfected and crowned this lovely assemblage of virtues. After having visited a convent of the Visitation, Père Cotton, the confessor of Henry IV., used to say: "Truly we might imagine ourselves in the Cenacle, for there all hearts make but one."[2] At Lyons, at one of the canonical visits, there was found but one defect to reprehend, namely, that the Sisters were too fond of their Superioress, Mother de Blonay.[3] At Annecy, Paris, Dijon, in a word, everywhere, the greatest happiness of the Sisters was to talk about the virtues of the absent.[4] At Orléans, Mother de la Roche, seeing a poor Sister suffering from violent colic, knelt down in a corner of the infirmary and, under the impulse of that great and genuine charity which gives its life for the object of its love, she begged God to relieve the sufferer and to give her the pain instead. God heard her prayer. The Sister was instantly relieved, and Mother de la Roche was attacked by a pain that left her only at death.[5]

This charity shone still more brightly in the readiness of the different convents to receive the infirm, portionless girls, and even the very aged. There was no house that did not possess some such members, and as if God wished to manifest His pleasure at this courageous obedience to the Rules of their holy Founder, it was often the infirm, the aged, and the dowerless who brought to the new Institute the greatest virtues and the sweetest consolations. In Chambéry, for instance, during Mother de Châtel's superiority, her venerable mother, aged almost ninety-seven, came one day begging on her knees the religious habit. Mother de Châtel hesitated on account of her advanced age; but the Sisters and St. Chantal were in favor of the venerable postulant, who entered the convent with such joy, humility, and fervor as to fill the beholders with admiration. She always took the last place and looked upon herself as the least among the Sisters, whom she used to thank for permitting her to live among them. But the most edifying and affecting scene of all was to see her kneel to receive her daughter's blessing, ask permissions of her, and give her an account of her actions with childlike simplicity and candor. She died soon after her entrance, having had the happiness of making her vows upon her death-bed.[1] At Grenoble, Madame Le Blanc, widow of the first President of the Parliament, after having founded the convent, retired to it at the age of seventy. She entered after dark, to avoid being carried thither in triumph by the poor whom she had so dearly loved. The Sisters used to say of her, that "a babe of two days could not have been more pliant and tractable than she;" and that "she had a heart of wax melted by the fire of divine love." A short time before the consummation of her sacrifice, her body began to waste away through the ardor of holy love that consumed her. The lower ends of her sleeves were found, after her death, hard as leather, through the tears that streamed from her eyes during prayer. Her habit, cut up into a thousand pieces, wrought miracles.[2] But we must pause, though we might recount many facts similar to the above. One more will suffice. The Visitation of Paris acquired at this period a precious treasure in the person of Madame de Bouthilliers.[3] She was seventy-seven years old. Her husband had just died at the age of eighty, after an honorable life. He took with him to the grave the reputation of having been the most upright magistrate France had for a long time seen. Their marriage had been blessed with nine children. The eldest was Minister of State to His Majesty Louis XIII.; the second was Bishop of Aire; the third, Bishop of Boulogne and afterward Archbishop of Tours; the fourth, who, like his eldest brother, remained in the world, held a high position in the Parisian Parliament. Their four daughters were all consecrated to God. Two of them joined the Franciscans, a third entered Carmel, and the fourth was Abbess of Fontevrault. Their grandchildren had followed similar paths, some being already settled in the world and others having retired to the cloister. Their granddaughter Cécile was at the Visitation; another, at Carmel. Madame de Bouthilliers was beginning to see her children's grandchildren. Fortune, honors, sanctity, long life, numerous posterity, none of the patriarchal blessings were wanting to her. It was precisely this that troubled her, that forced her into the cloister. She was too happy. She sought the Cross without being able to find it. Her Carmelite daughter said to her: "Come with me. You will find it at Carmel." Her granddaughter Cécile said: "No, come to the Visitation," and she chose the latter. She received the veil, at the age of eighty-three, from the hands of the Archbishop of Paris, in presence of Queen Mary de Médicis and the whole court, and wore it nearly a year with wonderful humility. Her granddaughter Cécile was Councillor and Aid at the parlor when her grandmother entered the convent. When she observed that the venerable novice failed, through the forgetfulness of age, in some of the observances marked for the Sisters in their intercourse with seculars, she used to advertise her in the refectory or Chapter. The humility and respect with which the good grandmother received the admonitions of her granddaughter filled the Sisters with admiration. Vain, however, were her efforts to experience the bitterness of the Cross. She could

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[1] *Fondation inédite de Montferrand.*

[2] *Fondation inédite de Grenoble.*

[3] *Vie de la Mère de Blonay*, p. 162.

[4] See the *Fondations inédites* of these convents.

[5] *Vies des premières Mères*, vol. i. p. 162.

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[1] *Vies de huit Vénérables Veuves de la Visitation.* MS.

[2] *Fondation inédite de Grenoble.*

[3] Claude-Françoise Machecop, born in Dijon, married in Burgundy, in 1575, Denis Bouthilliers, Lord of Fouilletourte and Petit-Thouars. Denis Bouthilliers heads the list of illustrious men that have rendered his name so great. Its two most celebrated branches are the Chavigny and the Rancé. All of our manuscripts and printed *Lives* call the husband of Claude-Françoise Machecop, Denis *Boute-*

lier. Moreri and Père Anselme write it Bouthilliers. Madame de Bouthilliers' life may be found in *Vies de huit Vénérables Veuves de la Visitation.*

never be unhappy! Shortly before her death she exclaimed with tears: "Alas! I thought I was entering religion to suffer and do penance, and I have found more joy in it than I ever tasted in the world."

We should never tire recalling these beautiful incidents, contemplating human nature conquered by grace, stripped of its egotism, its narrow-mindedness, its independence, its shameful passions, subdued by obedience, strengthened by humility, dilated and, as it were, magnified by love, rising to acts of devotedness that honor humanity as much as they glorify God.

And, in general, viewed in the light of grace triumphing over nature, what is more beautiful than the early days of the religious life? From the deserts of Thebaid, in which it originated and which it peopled with anchorites and stylites, let us pass to the, perhaps, not less wonderful solitudes of Citeaux and Clairvaux, during that short and brilliant period in which St. Bernard shone there as a star. Let us contemplate those lives of prayer and sacrifice, those mortified senses, those countenances wan, but amiable and fervent, those beings, worn out by macerations, who seem breathing their last, but who, nevertheless, found strength to preach the crusade to a hundred thousand men. Let us enter Rome a century later, and assist at the meeting of St. Dominic and St. Francis of Assisi. Let us follow the one into his new monastery of St. Sabina, ascend with the other to the summit of Alverno, and then say whether human nature was not conquered and, as it were, transfigured in those sublime beings. From Rome let us go into Spain, and inhale the perfume of roses and lilies that escapes from the convents reformed by St. Teresa. Let us visit in Toledo or Avila those young girls who sleep upon planks, who go barefoot, who bruise their body with iron chains, and whose souls, sick with love, can but "suffer or die." From Toledo and Avila let us return to France, and see, born of the breath of St. Vincent de Paul, and scattering through hospitals, over battle-fields, far-off isles, those Sisters of Charity, who force from impiety itself expressions of admiration and sympathy. Would we gaze upon other scenes? Let us shut ourselves up with St. Ignatius in the grotto of Manresa; cross the sea with St. Francis Xavier; or, if we prefer, come back to the pious cloisters of the Visitation, and after admiring in them such humility, obedience, devotedness to God and the neighbor, prepare ourselves to see still greater wonders, a more complete triumph of grace over nature, a more ineffable consummation of the soul in God.

CHAPTER VII.

THE PLAGUE IN FRANCE AND SAVOY.—THE CONVENTS OF THE VISITATION DURING THE PLAGUE.

1628—1631.

It was, above all, during that terrible plague which, toward the close of the year 1628, fell upon France, Piedmont, Italy, and, indeed, the whole face of the earth, and which for three years continued its horrible ravages, that appeared in all their splendor the admirable empire of grace and the wonderful transformation of souls of which we have just been painting an imperfect picture.

The scourges of the nineteenth century can give no adequate idea of what the plague was at the time of which we are speaking. The filth of the cities, the imperfect knowledge of the art of medicine, the absence of regular police capable of maintaining order amid confusion, the contagious character of the disease, believed to be even more contagious than it really was, all contributed to increase the mortality and augment fright and despair. In presence of a sickness which could be communicated by the touch, which was borne on the breath of the victim, with which everything he had used was impregnated, people shut themselves away from sight and contact. They dared see no one, touch nothing. The very food was open to suspicion. The dearest ties were dissolved. At the first appearance of the scourge they fled the cities, which for entire months were turned into deserts. The streets were covered with rank grass and traversed by wolves attracted thither by the scent of the unburied dead. Even the husbandman threw down his spade, and fled from the field. A year of pestilence was succeeded by a year of famine, which, in its turn, brought back the plague, thus forming a deadly and long revolving cycle.

Meanwhile, what became of the convents of the Visitation? Of all the houses in the deserted cities, they alone were occupied. Without food, remedies, medical assistance, without even confessors when the plague had carried them off, the Sisters stood their ground, sometimes spared, sometimes attacked, but always displaying heroic courage and self-devotedness.

One of the first convents threatened was that of Autun, then governed by Mother de Chastelluz. At the first appearance of danger she assembled the Chapter and proposed to the Sisters to take advantage of the liberty given by the Council of Trent, namely, to leave the convent and repair together to a castle healthfully situated in the country and offered them by the Countess de Roussillon, her sister. Scarcely had Mother de Chastelluz broached the subject, when the Sisters with one voice protested against it. They would not, they said, break inclosure, they feared no pestilence but that of the soul; and, embracing one another, they pledged themselves to mutual service until death. When the news of this generous and courageous action reached St. Chantal, her heart overflowed with joy, and she wrote to the heroic community a congratulatory letter, still preserved as a treasure.[1]

Almost at the same time the plague broke out in Moulins with such violence that, at the end of four or five days, there remained in the city the sick who were unable to flee, and a few poor wretches who braved the scourge for the sake of pillaging the deserted houses. M. de la Condre, the confessor of the Sisters, remained courageously at his post and died amongst the first. His last prayer and blessing were for his dear daughters. He sent them word, from his death-bed, to be calm and not to fear, since, as he said, he had entreated the Blessed Virgin, his Mistress and Queen, not to allow them who assisted her servant and slave to suffer from their charity, and especially his dear daughters, through whom he had entirely consecrated himself to her. Encouraged by this message, the Sisters remained eight months in the midst of the dead and dying, abandoned by every one, and even deprived of spiritual assistance. One consolation, however, was afforded them. A holy priest belonging to a Religious Order, who was still ministering to the wants of the plague-stricken, used to write from time to time to the Sisters to pray earnestly for his poor sick and have no fear for themselves; "for that every day, holding his Master, namely, the Blessed Sacrament, in his hands and on his breast, whilst carrying Him to the sick, he bore Him around the walls that inclosed His dear spouses, that He might not permit the plague to enter the peaceful retreat of those happy voluntary prisoners. He never made this little procession without a feeling of tender confidence that Our Lord would preserve them. He notified them of this, as his good Sisters, that they might redouble their prayers to their adorable Master."[1]

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[1] *Fondation inédite d'Autun*, p. 239.

From Autun and Moulins the plague travelled rapidly and with increasing fury to Paray. The day after its appearance the city was abandoned. There remained only the Sisters, about forty poor families, the confessor of the convent, and the curé of the parish. The last mentioned, a young priest just installed in his office, was unwilling to forsake the remnant of his scattered parishioners. Almost at its first appearance the plague broke out in the convent. Sister Claude-Antoinette was the first attacked. Three large carbuncles appeared on her knee. She was immediately removed to a rustic cottage which had been built for the purpose at the end of the garden. As all the Sisters earnestly entreated to be allowed to expose their life to nurse her, they drew lots, Sister Jeanne-Catherine Vivian carrying off the prize. Her companions tenderly embraced her, congratulating her on the honor and happiness that had fallen to her; whilst she, most happy of all, received the blessing of the Superioress, and shut herself up with her dear invalid. The physician who usually attended the convent had retired to the country. With great difficulty and many entreaties he was induced to come as far as the ramparts, where he could just hear the Superioress speaking to him from the little grated window of a tower. The consultation was short. The physician shouted back that, if the Sister was not bled, she would certainly die, and, "after prescribing some little remedies, hurried off as quickly as possible, so much did he fear the impure air of the city." To prevail upon him to come himself and bleed the Sister was not even to be thought of. Fortunately, towards evening, "a young man mounted the ramparts and called out that he would do anything for money; that he would bleed the sick Sister for a hundred crowns." It would have been very difficult for the Sisters to find this sum. At last, however, he agreed upon a hundred francs. He entered, bled the sufferer, and taught the Sisters themselves to bleed, to burn some disinfectants, and to prepare some remedies. All this was, indeed, very insufficient, but it was the greatest help tendered them during the whole time of the plague.[1]

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[1] *Fondation inédite de Moulins*, p. 79.

The Sisters of Montferrand, where the plague broke out about the same time, wishing to follow the example of Moulins and Autun, assembled in Chapter at the first rumor of the contagion, and promised to take care of one another until death, without leaving their holy inclosure. But the news of the ravages made at Paray induced their ecclesiastical Superior to refuse his consent to their noble plan. He ordered them to start without delay for Saint-Flour, where the Sisters of their Order offered them an asylum. We may imagine their journey. At a time in which all religious women were cloistered; when one might traverse the kingdom without meeting, either in the streets or on the highroads, a single female in the monastic habit, the sight of a whole community on horseback or in dilapidated vehicles, hastily procured, and coming from a plague-stricken city, excited a general panic. The houses on their way were closed against them, and villages barricaded on their approach. The second night they were obliged to sleep in the woods, in the huts of the charcoal-burners, for the villagers would not lodge them. It was still worse on their arrival at Saint-Flour. The city gates were closed, and the people, fearing that the religious would bring the plague, assembled in a threatening attitude in the public squares. It is impossible to say what might have happened had not the nuns prudently stopped outside the suburbs, nor where they would have passed the night had not the Bishop placed at their service his country-house, two or three leagues from the city. There they made their quarantine, after which the people, seeing no sign of the contagion among them, allowed them to go to the Convent of the Visitation. Here they were impatiently awaited, and here the two communities spent seven months together in peace and union never to be forgotten.[1]

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[1] *Fondation inédite de Paray*, p. 283.

The scourge, which had been threatening all France, but had broken out in only a few places, now suddenly extended its ravages. The early and excessive heat, a prolonged drought which had dried up all the springs, the atmosphere, burning, heavy, and stifling—all concurred to increase the mortality. At Lyons, Grenoble, Valence, Aix, Brest, and Crémieux, it broke out almost simultaneously, everywhere violent, everywhere carrying off entire populations. The course it took, incomprehensible and baffling calculation, added to the general terror. At Lyons, for example, there were two convents of the Visitation: one in Bellecour, in the lower part of the city, between the Rhone and the Saône, surrounded, so to say, by water; the other in one of the healthiest positions on the summit of Mount Fourvières, at Antiquaille. The former entirely escaped the plague, whilst the latter was so furiously attacked by it that half the community died during the first few days. "Alas! alas! dear Mother," wrote the Superioress to St. Chantal, "what shall I tell you of our poor house? Of our twenty-two Sisters seven are already dead. And such Sisters! They were pearls of virtue." The Assistant, Sister Marie-Jacqueline de l'Étang, the first victim, died in the odor of sanctity. "I do not think," continued the Superioress, "that a truer religious or one more indifferent to the things of earth could be met. During her whole sickness we never observed in her the least act of resistance. She said that if obedience had ordered her to swallow a bar of red-hot iron she would have tried at once to obey." The second struck down by the fatal disease was an humble Out-Sister named Jeanne, whose death was deeply regretted. Her life was a kind of little miracle. Born of parents poor and so ignorant that they had not even taught her the existence of God, when she was alone in the fields, guarding her sheep, she would ponder in her own mind and ask herself who could have made the earth, the flowers, the trees, the sun, the night and the day; and then, answering her own question, she used to say: "It must have been some one very great and noble." Then she would cast herself on her knees and exclaim: "Whoever Thou mayest be, Thou dost certainly deserve to be loved, Thou who hast made heaven and earth and me also." For three entire years she adored in this manner the God whom she did not know, and meditated upon His works. At the end of this time she happened to hear the Blessed Virgin spoken of, and learned that she was the Mother of God. By dint of questioning she at last became acquainted with all the mysteries of religion. Enraptured with what she had learned, and full of regret for not having known it sooner, she thought but of still greater solitude in which she might meditate more constantly on these wonders of love. She had been two years in the second convent of Lyons, advancing with giant strides on the road to perfection, when, stricken down by the plague, she joyfully winged her flight into eternity. In a few days five other Sisters followed, which circumstance roused the holy emulation of the survivors, "each of whom, thinking that she would be the next attacked, strove to adorn herself with virtues to meet the Divine Spouse." The first convent of Lyons, still safe from the scourge, on hearing the terrible condition of Antiquaille, exhibited heroic charity. Mother de Blonay, the Superioress, wrote, entreating them to send to her those that had the plague, promising to nurse them and care for them till death. This noble offer was refused; but the malady making such ravages that no alternative remained but to abandon the infected convent, Mother de Blonay wrote again to Antiquaille, and begged them to come to Bellecour, where they would receive a hearty welcome. The Sisters of Antiquaille hesitated some days longer, but at last concluded to accept the offer; for the dead were lying all around the convent, some even at the very door, the air was daily becoming more infected, and there was not a single Sister able to nurse the others. They left on foot, their veils lowered, and moved in a sad procession through the deserted city, praying as they went. The streets were so thickly strewn with the unburied dead that one Sister fell over a corpse. They were received with open arms by the Sisters of Bellecour, who, forgetful of the fact that their guests had just come from an infected house, that they had seen and touched the dead, embraced them with warm affection, and conducted them to their choir, where their voices soon mingled in one same canticle. Almighty God blessed the charity of the Sisters of Bellecour. During the four months that the two communities dwelt together there was not a single victim among them, although the scourge continued to rage in the city with frightful violence.[1]

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[1] *Fondation inédite de Montferrand,* p. 140.

From Lyons it advanced rapidly upon Valence, where it broke out "with a kind of fury," but where the charity of one of the Sisters arrested its progress almost at once. The contagion was already in the convent, and twelve or fifteen Sisters felt the symptoms that were its too certain precursors, when one of the most fervent, Sister Marie-Constance Orlendin, went to the chapel, and offered her life to God to save the community. Her offer was accepted, for she was attacked that very day by several plague spots, which soon hurried her out of life. She died, too proud, she said, to give her life for her dear companions, and the contagion spread no further.[2]

Something similar happened at Grenoble. But she who, in this instance, offered her life for her Sisters was not called upon to complete her heroic sacrifice. This was Mother de Beaumont. Seeing the whole city decimated by the plague, and the danger to which her convent was exposed, for an ambulance had been established at the very door, and when the clothes of the poor victims were burned the pestiferous fumes filled the house, she offered to die instead of her daughters. She drew up her act of sacrifice in the following form: "My God, having by Thy grace no other will than Thine, I come to offer myself to Thee, my Creator, to die of the plague, and thus pay in my own person, as the most criminal, what Thy justice may see fit to exact of the community Thou hast placed under my charge. I give, unreservedly, to Thee my heart, my body, my soul, and my whole being. Yes, Thou Love of my soul, I wish every pulsation of my heart, every thought of my mind, and every motion of my body to be so many actual and repeated renewals of this my offer, so that my entire being may be sacrificed to Thy glory, . . . in union with the sacrifices offered by Our Lord Jesus Christ to His Eternal Father for the salvation of all creatures, the most unworthy of whom I acknowledge myself to be." God accepted her holocaust, and the convent was spared from the scourge.[1]

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[1] *Fondation inédite de Lyon*, p. 33.

[2] *Fondation inédite de Valence*, p. 167.

At Nevers, Mother Françoise-Jacqueline de Musy displayed similar courage and extraordinary prudence. When the plague broke out in her community, mindful of the prescription of the Rule, that the Superioress must serve the sick with her own hands, and the still more forcible words of the Gospel, that the good shepherd gives his life for his sheep, she determined to shut herself up with the plague-stricken Sisters in the huts that had been prepared for them at the farther end of the garden. But the community would not allow it. Obliged thus to remain far from the danger, she devoted herself to keep alive among her daughters joy, fervor, and a holy desire of death, which are the best preservatives against pestilence. In this she was truly successful. The Sisters, beholding themselves upon the brink of the grave, recited several times a day the prayers by which the Church consoles and assists the dying; and they were so happy in this state of expectation of their Spouse that the most fortunate in their eyes were they whom He visited and took away with Him the first. Again was seen the tender union that existed among all the houses of the Visitation. Every day brought the Sisters of Nevers letters from the other convents, containing money, remedies, and repeated offers of every kind of service. They soon numbered over two hundred. They were carefully copied into a book, to stand as a lasting memorial of the charity and union so earnestly inculcated by St. Francis de Sales, and now so well practised.

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[1] *Vies de plusieurs Supérieures*, p. 98.

The plague was introduced into Crémieux by vagabond beggars. The inhabitants could not believe that the scourge was in their midst. Whole families died of strange pains, accompanied by unknown symptoms. And yet they doubted whether it was really the plague, or rather, as is always the case, they tried to persuade themselves that it was not. But they were soon forced to acknowledge the painful reality. One day, after a large meeting of the inhabitants, the details of which are not mentioned by the chroniclers, the streets were so encumbered with dead that it was no longer possible to deny the presence of the fatal scourge. The Out-Sisters of the Visitation had accidentally fallen in with the crowd at this meeting, and that very same evening three large tumors appeared upon one of them. To prevent the spread of the contagion, the Sister descended from a window by a ladder into the garden, at the lower end of which a cabin had been hastily prepared for her. To this temporary abode she retired with Sister Françoise-Augustine Pelet, who devoted herself to her. As the sick Sister was young and robust, she lay tormented with strange and wild fits of delirium three days and three nights, at the end of which death came. On its approach she became calm, and courageously made the sacrifice God asked of her. On the same evening that she had been struck by the plague she had prepared the vegetables for supper. This fact so endangered the community that the doctor, as soon as he heard of it, told the Sisters that they could not prepare graves quickly enough to bury all. Fortunately Mother Anne-Marie Rosset was Superioress at the time. She immediately led the Sisters to the chapel, and roused their courage by one of those fervent prayers which, better than any one else, she knew how to make. Next morning, however, six carbuncles broke out on the clerk who served the convent Mass, and soon after the confessor himself was mortally attacked. Until then the Sisters had refused to leave their inclosure; but the entreaties of their dying confessor at last prevailed over their hesitation, and Mother Rosset, followed by the Sisters, two by two, with lowered veils, left the house that same day. They passed by the house of their confessor, and received from the window his last blessing. He died a few minutes later, even before the Sisters reached the house that had been lent them, about two leagues out of town. In it, instead of the pestilence, they were to undergo the torment of hunger.[1]

At Crest, also, the confessor was stricken down among the first. Already suffering, though in secret, he went one morning to spend an hour in the parlor with the community, to encourage them by a few pious words. He even distributed pictures among them. Two hours later "this good ecclesiastic, more anxious for his daughters than for himself, knocked at the door, calling out adieu, and saying that two carbuncles had appeared on him. He took his bed upon his shoulders, and went to his father's house, where he died four days after. He was not yet dead when the Out-Sister who had opened the door for him was also attacked, and everything announced for the convent a speedy and terrible invasion of the plague. Then was seen another of those heroic sacrifices that, as it were, force the exterminating angel to sheathe his sword. There was, at Crest, a young Sister belonging to a noble family of Provence. Her name was De Bachason. In personal and intellectual endowments she equalled Marie-Aimée de Blonay, Marie-Denise Martignat, and Marie-Péronne de Châtel. She possessed the same youth, the same beauty, and the same fortune. Like them, despising such advantages, she had devoted herself to good works, had invited the Sisters of the Visitation to come to Crest, and, after founding the convent, had taken the veil under the name of Sister Marie-Catherine. She had lived the life of a fervent religious for several years when the plague broke out in Crest with great violence, and threatened to attack the convent. At this sad prospect the young nun was seized with remorse for having brought the Sisters to Crest. If they fell victims to the plague, would she not be responsible for their death? Full of this thought, she went before the Blessed Sacrament, and begged Our Lord to strike her rather than any of the other Sisters, offering her life to discharge all debts due His divine justice. She left the choir convinced that God had heard her prayer, and, radiant with joy, hastened to announce to the Superioress that she would be the only one to die of the plague. She was attacked that very evening. "Then," say the old *Mémoires*, "this innocent dove commenced to pour forth heartfelt thanks to her Divine Spouse. She was all humility, contrition, and love. 'Ah!' she repeatedly exclaimed in the midst of her sufferings, 'what joy fills my soul when I think that, as soon as I am released from this prison, the Blessed Virgin will present me to her Son and my holy Father will receive me.' She was unwilling that the Capuchin Father should expose his life by entering to administer to her the sacraments, or, by his entrance, increase the Sisters' danger. Having heard that such was allowed in case of necessity, she told her sins to the Superioress, who repeated them from a window to the priest standing below. From the street he gave the dying Sister absolution and the indulgence *in articulo mortis.* After this her peace and confidence were so great that her nurses felt their own heart inundated with sweetness. Eight hours before she died she suffered singular pains with devout cheerfulness. Jesus and Mary were her sweetest remedy. At last the longed-for hour came, and, her eyes fixed upon the Crucifix and a smile of humble trust upon her lips, she calmly gave up her holy soul to God. She had been sick only five days. The words of this dear Sister were verified, for no one else was attacked by the plague, although the danger was evident." [1]

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[1] *Fondation inédite de Crémieux.*

St. Chantal's anxiety and grief on receiving these oft-repeated accounts may easily be imagined, though the courage, energy, heroism, obedience, and charity of her daughters consoled her. But how could she stay her tears at the thought of their danger? The convents attacked by the plague were, at the same time, besieged by poverty. At Saint-Flour the Sisters, alone in the deserted city, were a whole day without bread. At Autun they had nothing but the herbs that grew in their garden. At Crémieux they were in want of clothes and shoes. At Crest, Moulins, and Montferrand the state of things was still worse. In many of the convents they who escaped the plague ran the risk of dying of hunger.

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[1] *Fondation inédite de Crest,* p. 335.

Never did Mother de Chantal appear more admirable than under these circumstances. The old ardor of her nature, which for so many years she had been trying to moderate, now reasserted itself. "I have written three or four letters to you, my dear daughter," she wrote to the Superioress of one of the convents attacked by the plague, "and of what are you thinking not to answer me? Do you not know that I am on thorns?" It was also at this trying period that she displayed that industrious activity, that practical knowledge, that enthusiasm tempered by coolness, so valuable on such occasions. She thought of, she provided for everything. Her heart embraced in its tender solicitude all the wants of her daughters; her mind was as large as her heart. To Lyons, Grenoble, Chambéry, and Saint-Flour she sent flour; to Crest, medicines; to Crémieux, clothes and shoes; and to Autun, a flock of sheep. In Paris she called together a council of physicians for the purpose of consulting upon means against the scourge. She assembled a body of theologians, also, to examine whether the Sisters could in conscience leave their inclosure in order to avoid the contagion. She sent circular letters to all her houses to encourage, console, and strengthen the Sisters, and to remind them to prepare for the coming of the Spouse.[1]

Notwithstanding her zealous efforts, she wept, she sighed, she accused herself of doing too little for her daughters, and striking her breast, she proclaimed herself the cause of these chastisements. Her charity carried her even farther, and she was heard to exclaim: "Our poor Sisters are in such want that, when I think of it, I would willingly sell myself, if I could, in order to assist them."[2]

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[1] For the facts just cited, see manuscript accounts of the foundation of the convents mentioned, and letters of the saint addressed to those convents.

[2] *Lettres inédites*, p. 131; Migne, p. 1465.

At this juncture she received a letter from His Lordship, Jean-François de Sales, Bishop of Annecy, directing her to leave the capital and return to Annecy without delay, and by the shortest road. He added a positive prohibition against her stopping in any city or convent attacked by the plague. This order, issued by her Superior on becoming aware of the progress of the scourge in France, and through fear of its soon reaching Paris, was instantly obeyed. She set out promptly, and, painful as it must have been for her to pass the plague-stricken convents without being able to see and console the afflicted Sisters, she strictly obeyed the directions received. We may follow her by the letters she wrote to them on the route, and by which she sought to indemnify herself for not being able to embrace them. July 2, 1628, she was in Bourges, preparing to start for Paray, and begging help on the way for her "poor, plague-stricken houses." From the 10th to the 20th of August she was between Nevers and Moulins, "very sorry at not being able to go to the relief of her daughters." On the 23d of August she was approaching Paray; but as she had been forbidden to enter the town, she stopped at the little village of Lamotte, two leagues' distance, whence she despatched a letter to the Countess de Toulongeon, telling her of her trials, and asking her assistance. "My dearest daughter," she wrote, "we came to this place, two leagues from Paray, in order to hear some news of our poor Sisters. I sent for their confessor, who, after God, is their only help, and he told me that the four Sisters attacked are out of danger. Poor Sister Marie-Marguerite is dead. Please to notify the convents of it, that they may pray for her. As to the other Sisters, they are destitute of every kind of human assistance, except that afforded by this good priest, who goes through the villages procuring what food he can for them, risking his own life, for he has already narrowly escaped being murdered. Should he take the plague, I do not see how our poor Sisters could help dying of starvation. They are, besides, in very great and evident danger of contracting the disease as are all in the town, but they more than all others, since the burial-place of the pest-stricken is back of their convent. There is, moreover, in the opinion of those that live in the environs of Paray, no possibility, humanly speaking, of the town's being purified, as no means have been taken for that purpose, the dead being even left in the houses unburied. See in what danger those poor Sisters are and will be. They have written to me, and their confessor has told me, that they have no means of procuring relief. They stand in need of every kind of assistance, though they still have a little of your money, flour, and wine, but a *very* little. Indeed, my dearest daughter, you must, if you please, provide for their wants." [1]

To support her petition, the saint went from Lamotte to Alonne, the home of Madame de Toulongeon. Not daring to go to Autun, she wrote to Mother de Chastelluz, urging her to abandon the convent as speedily as possible, and accept the hospitality offered her and her community by the Abbé de Toulongeon in his priory of Méière. "Believe, my child," she added, "that we will cordially and unreservedly assist you as far as we can. We are afraid to send any one to Autun, and we should like you to make arrangements to communicate with our messengers, from the top of the city wall on the right of your garden. See if this can be done, and be sure to let me know whatever you would like me to do for you whilst I am here. My God! what a privation not to be able to see you and our poor Sisters, whom, with you, I most affectionately greet." [2]

Mother de Chastelluz, unable to convey to St. Chantal news of the community, and knowing that the venerable Foundress would, on her return from Alonne, pass at a short half-league from the pest-stricken city, obtained permission from her Superiors to go wait for her in the middle of a field, where, speaking at a distance and against the wind, she could consult her upon several important matters. When Mother de Chantal saw the good Superioress standing afar off, she invoked God's help and, making the sign of the cross, said: "Let us approach, in the name of God." Then hurrying toward Mother de Chastelluz, she embraced her and made her get into the carriage. Madame de Toulongeon had with her her little Gabrielle, about six years old. She trembled violently on seeing this action of her saintly mother, on account of the danger to which she and her child were thus exposed. "If I had not been sure that my mother is a saint," she used to say, "I should have died of fright." Madame de Roussillon, to whose castle they repaired, was still more frightened. Casting herself on her knees before the saint, she said to her: "Madame, if your sanctity did not relieve my fear, I should tremble for my safety and give my house up to my sister; but I am confident that no misfortune will fall upon any one in it. Give me your blessing."

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[1] *Lettres inédites*, p. 372.

[2] *Lettres inédites*, p. 368.

Mother de Chantal next proceeded to Dijon, where she received from the different convents letters "that made her shed many tears." "But," she wrote to the Sisters of Lyons, "I raise my thoughts above all created things, above death itself, even in the midst of so many dead."[1] She remained only a short time in Dijon, and next went to Châlon-sur-Saône, of which place her nephew, Henri de Neufchèzes, had just been appointed Bishop. There she was loaded with honors by the entire population. The Carmelites and the Benedictines sent to beg a visit from her, and the Ursulines invited her to dine with them. They already regarded her as a saint, and cut a piece off the end of her veil, to keep as a relic. When she perceived it that night on removing her veil, she wept bitterly. Next morning she went to the Bishop and begged him to allow her to leave Châlon without delay. "For," she said, "these religious manifest their esteem for me in so unreasonable a manner that, indeed, I cannot suffer it." "My dear aunt," replied the Bishop, "the more you blame them for what they have done, the more reason I find to praise them." Far from allowing her to leave Châlon, he required her to hold a public reception in the large hall of the episcopal palace for all who wished to see her. She obeyed, and an immense concourse, of every rank and condition of life, hastened to pay their respects to her. "But she kept so close to the wall that no one could get behind her to cut her habit. Despite her precaution, however, she could not prevent her habit and veil from being daily clipped."[2]

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[1] *Lettres inédites*, ccxxiv.

[2] *Mémoires* of Mother de Chaugy, p. 222.

On leaving Châlon, she went to Bourg and thence to Crémieux, where the Countess de Disimieux, who called on her, was cured of dropsy. On October 31, 1628, she at last reached Annecy.

This long journey through pest-stricken provinces, her grief at the death of so many of her daughters, and her constant anxiety, increased her abandonment to God's will and developed in her soul a secret longing for death. Such sentiments formed the theme of all her letters at this period. "We belong to God," she constantly wrote; "may it be done unto us according to His will! Nothing is so useful to our soul, nothing will be so sweet as to abandon ourselves entirely to His holy pleasure."

"We shall die here as well as at Lyons," she wrote from Annecy; "for the day before yesterday we buried one of our Sisters, a treasure, a perfectly pure soul. I believe, in the goodness of our well-beloved Lord and Spouse, that she flew straight to heaven, like a pure white dove. O my daughter, how little it matters of what sickness we die, provided we mount to that blessed eternity! O holy Mother of the children of God, when shall we rest in thy bosom and undying arms? My child, our soul ought to pine away with this desire. But, no; I am wrong. Let us sweetly await the hour that the Divine Spouse has marked to crown us with this happiness; and whilst waiting let us desire but one thing, namely, to please Him by fulfilling His holy will." [1]

By recalling Mother de Chantal to Annecy, to the pure air of the lofty mountains, it was hoped to withdraw her from all danger. But the plague, arrested in its progress by the cold of winter, resumed its course at the melting of the snow, and attacked Belley in February, 1629; Chambéry and Rumilly in March and April; and, shortly after Easter, broke out in Annecy. Count Louis de Sales had had a sad presentiment of it. The people had that year indulged to excess in the pleasures of the Carnival, and had even prolonged their festivities far into Lent, restrained neither by the eloquent sermons delivered in the town nor by fear of the scourge of

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[1] Letter to Mother Catherine de Crémeaux de la Grange, Superioress of Lyons, December 8, 1628.

God then ravaging the country around. One evening, as the Count was returning from a visit to the tomb of St. Francis de Sales, he met on his way some bands of masqueraders. "Of what are these people thinking?" he exclaimed. "I shall be very much surprised if God's anger does not soon burst upon us."

He was not wrong. Some days later rumors of death from a strange disease came from different parts of the town, and an examination of the dead left no doubt of the presence of the terrible scourge. It was under such circumstances that the community of Annecy chose Mother de Chantal for Superioress, May 23, 1629. God so permitted it, that the Order might have the saint at its head at a time in which it was to pass through one of the greatest crises of its history.

The news that the plague had attacked Annecy spread with lightning rapidity through the Visitation houses of France and Savoy, and awakened in them the greatest anxiety. Letters came from all directions conjuring Mother de Chantal to leave Annecy for a place of safety; and, despite the general distress, considerable assistance in money was also sent. The Prince and Princess de Carignan wrote to Mother de Chantal, entreating her to leave the town; and, not being able to persuade her to do so, they declared that they would apply to the Duke of Savoy for an order to that effect. But how could they think that the saint would listen to such a command? "Oh, pardon my frankness," she wrote, "but I have not the courage to abandon my flock, for which I should always be ready to sacrifice my life."

Free to follow her inclination, and resolved not to leave her convent under any circumstances, St. Chantal's first thought was for her Order. She addressed to all the Superioresses a circular letter containing her last advice in case she fell a victim to the plague. Beholding herself surrounded by death, she said, and exposed to it as much by her great age as by the disease that was destroying nearly the whole city of Annecy, she had maturely considered the means of preserving union and vigor in the Order. She recommended, above all, the exact observance of Rules, without changing anything in them, union and conformity with the convent of Annecy, charity, peace, and fervor. She added the hope that, if these holy principles were maintained, the Institute would continue to spread throughout the world fruits and blessings similar to those it had already produced —"fruits and blessings," she added, "beyond all that can be imagined, as I myself know."

This letter was to be circulated only in case of her death. It was her last will and testament to the Order, and as such she committed it to the secret guardianship of the Superioresses of the respective convents.[1]

This first duty accomplished, Mother de Chantal, finding herself cut off from the other houses of the Order by the sanitary condition of the city, devoted herself entirely to the poor sick dying around her. She sent them flour, money, and remedies, with a generosity equal to their distress. By September she had expended in remedies all the money—and it was a considerable sum—that had been forwarded to her from the other convents in France. In vain did she diminish the portions of the Sisters to increase those of the poor; in vain did she resolve with them to eat only coarse black bread. The end of the month found the supply of grain entirely exhausted. But God, who is bountiful in His mercies, and who never allows Himself to be outdone in generosity, did not abandon His servants. They had robbed themselves for His sake, and He refilled their empty coffers. The old *Mémoires* tell us that "when Mother de Chantal saw the distress of the poor, she ordered a part of our grain to be distributed among them, so that by the end of September it was all gone, and not a sou to replenish our store. But one of our Bishop's almoners bought twelve measures of wheat for us, and had them ground; and these twelve measures filled a bin large enough to hold sixteen. God continued to bless this store, so that it lasted until we could procure more, that is, six or seven weeks longer than the same quantity would have sufficed at any other time. And yet, besides supplying the community, which was very large, it was daily given freely to the poor, for whom we used to have a baking every week. It was the same with the provision of wine, as was particularly noticed by our dear Sister Marie-Anne Devoséry, who was then Procuratrix, and who repeatedly told us that she beheld this providence of God so clearly that she never thought of it without particular respect and special gratitude for His goodness."[1]

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[1] Letter of August 20, 1629. The copy addressed to Mother de Blonay, at Lyons, is still preserved in the archives of the Visitation at Annecy.

Mother de Chantal was not satisfied with thus unsparingly distributing to the poor all the breadstuff and money she could get. Prevented by the inviolable laws of inclosure from visiting the sick in person, she induced others to supply her place. Her burning words fired the enthusiasm of the Bishop, Monseigneur Jean-François de Sales, who, with a handful of heroic priests, went about ministering consolation to the dying for more than ten months. It was she who inspired M. Hector de Fessigny, the First Syndic of the town, and some other generous citizens, with courage to brave the plague and devote themselves to the service of its victims. Contemporary writers are unanimous upon this point. "The fervid words of this great saint," wrote Hector de Fessigny, "filled me with enthusiasm. . . . She gave me about two dozen *Agnus Dei*, assuring me that they who wore them would not die of the plague. I distributed them among my friends, who were constantly with the plague-stricken, and repeated to them Mother de Chantal's words. Our confidence was fully justified by the result. We were all preserved from the disease."[2]

"O my dear Mother," His Lordship Jean-François de Sales used to say, "you are my Moses and I am your Josue. Whilst your hands are raised to heaven, I and my assistants are combating the calamities of our people."

If Mother de Chantal's influence was so great over those with whom she had only occasional intercourse, what must it have been over the Sisters with whom she lived? It was indeed wonderful, the peace and serenity of her spiritual daughters in the very centre of the infection, and face to face with a death imminent and horrible, that put the bravest to flight. The community exercises were not once interrupted. In the midst of the mournful silence of the city their bell rang out as sweetly and regularly as before, and the same soft and devout chanting was heard behind their grate. "I always saw our Sisters in their usual tranquillity," wrote St. Chantal; "there never appeared in the community fear, anxiety, or dread. The customary exercises of our state went on exactly without interruption or dispensation, with the usual peace and cheerfulness. . . . Although two or three times there was reason to believe the disease was in the house, yet I never observed the least consternation among our Sisters. They took their little remedies quite cheerfully, each one keeping herself ready to pass into eternity as soon as notified, for we were determined not to expose our good and holy confessor. If any one had stood in need of him, he would have heard her confession from a distance. To administer the Holy Eucharist to her, he would have put the Sacred Host between two small slices of bread and laid it upon the place prepared for the purpose, whence it would have been taken as respectfully as possible by the Sister nurse. This is the way the sacraments are administered in this country to the pest-stricken."

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[1] *Annales manuscrites de la Visitation d'Annecy,* manuscript 4to. (Archives of Annecy.)

[2] *Procès de Canonisation.* Deposition of M. Hector de Fessigny, First Syndic of Annecy.

Such was the peace enjoyed by the community during this period of trial, when neither visits nor letters were received, that St. Chantal used to declare that, if the poor people had not suffered, she would have been glad for it to last; for never before since her entrance into religion had she led so quiet a life.[1] But as the poor were suffering intensely, our saint unremittingly besought God, with tears and sighs, to put an end to the scourge. Besides extraordinary prayers, the Sisters fasted in turn every day on bread and water, performed public penances in the refectory, and disciplined themselves to blood in private. Nearly every day processions were made through the cloister, the Sisters walking barefoot and with a rope around the neck. They stopped at every oratory, praying and weeping over the sins of the people, and afterward took a severe discipline for the space of a *Miserere.* The Sisters who were witnesses of these pious scenes say that no one could form an idea of Mother de Chantal's appearance on those occasions. With a sad and inflamed countenance, her eyes bathed in tears, she dragged herself along on her naked knees, a rope around her neck, crying out: "Mercy, mercy, my God! Pardon sinners!"

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[1] Letter from the Sisters of the Visitation, Annecy, to those of the first convent of Lyons, Feb. 11, 1630. The original letter is preserved in the archives at Annecy. See also a letter to Mother de Blonay, July 30, 1329.

The plague yielded, at last, to these ardent prayers. It abandoned the city after having ravaged it for nearly a year. By degrees it disappeared from Savoy, France, and Italy; and toward the close of 1631 only slight and rare cases of it were met.

It was during the long hours spent by Mother de Chantal in praying, weeping, and immolating herself for the plague-stricken that she felt more forcibly than ever a regret that so far nothing had been able to silence. This regret, upon which, she used to say, she could not allow her thoughts to rest, for fear of rousing her feelings, was to see no religious woman at the bedside of the dying. Twenty years before, when leaving a world that she had edified by her heroic charity, she had conceived the sublime thought of supplying this want. According to her first idea, the Visitation was to be a school of devotedness in which the Sisters would learn *to visit*, nurse, console, and serve the poor. But the idea was premature, and on that very account not understood. Forced to renounce it, she had for twenty years been on the watch to see whether any one would rise up to remark this great want of the age and of the Church, and try to supply it. Vain expectation! No one appeared. There were, indeed, here and there, in the midst of the plague-stricken cities, priests meeting death with heroism, monks exposing themselves to every danger in order to minister to the dying, and even simple laymen and courageous women serving them with their own hands; but virgins consecrated to God, uniting monastic virtues with the ministrations of corporal charity, were nowhere to be seen at the pillow of suffering. Impenetrable grates hid them from all eyes and absolutely separated them from the world, though in their heart there dwelt the most ardent heroism.

Whilst the plague was ravaging France in 1619 and 1628, that is, whilst the regret of which we have spoken was uppermost in Mother de Chantal's mind, she happened to be in Paris, where St. Vincent de Paul resided. She saw him almost every day. How often she must have communicated her thought to one so capable of understanding her! How often she must have pointed out to him the poor and abandoned sufferers, reminded him of the primitive plan of the Visitation, the necessity of returning to it, and the facility with which it could be carried out! And as St. Vincent de Paul was very prudent and she herself very ardent, in what burning words must she, especially at the time of the second plague, have spurred on his zeal and quickened his charity! He, at last, decided to follow her suggestion, and commenced the work about the year 1634, that is, at the cessation of the great plague whose course we have been following. Twenty years had matured St. Chantal's idea; two plagues, one after the other, had prepared its way in the popular mind; and when, at last, presented by the hand of St. Vincent de Paul, it met with no opposition. Few institutions have brought so much glory to their founder and more honor to the Church, even in the eyes of her enemies, than the admirable Congregation of the Sisters of Charity. But always humble in success, St. Vincent de Paul never ceased to declare that the first idea of the Institute was not his own, that he owed it to the Foundress of the Visitation; and when speaking to his daughters of their new Congregation, he used to take pleasure in giving them a characteristic title, namely, "The Heritage of Madame de Chantal."[1]

Thus, in her old age, our great saint had the satisfaction to see the sapling which she had so earnestly desired to plant in her youth grow up into a tree. She lived long enough to enjoy the perfume of its first blossoms, taste its fruit, and foresee its magnificent growth. And if, perchance, it ever occurred to her that the beautiful tree had been planted by other hands than hers, the thought, we imagine, was for one so humble an increase of happiness and consolation!

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[1] *Saint Vincent de Paul, sa Vie, son Temps,* etc., by M. l'Abbé Maynard. 4 vols. 8vo, Paris, 1860.

CHAPTER VIII.

MOTHER DE CHANTAL TAKES ACTIVE STEPS FOR THE CANONIZATION OF ST. FRANCIS DE SALES.—GENERAL PUBLICATION OF HIS WRITINGS.—HIS TOMB IS OPENED.

1630—1632.

We have just said that, had it not been for the sufferings of the people, Mother de Chantal would have been glad for the plague to continue, as she had not had so peaceful a time since her entrance into religion. This lover of solitude and silence, who had left all to live hidden in the shadow of the altar, and who, for twenty years, had been doomed to continual travelling, taxed with an immense correspondence, and more pressed by business than she had ever been in the world, then enjoyed a little rest. Visits at the parlor well-nigh ceased; letters were exceedingly rare; foundations and journeys had become impossible. Between the great works that had filled up the first period of her religious life and the still greater enterprises that were to sanctify the second, God granted her a short respite. It was the only one during her long career.

Who but herself would have regarded as rest that short interruption to labor, in the midst of a plague-stricken city and imminent danger? But in saintly hearts love is stronger than death. With contempt for life, it communicates to them presence of mind, liberty of action, serenity and peace of which nothing can deprive them. Mother de Chantal profited by this respite to retire into solitude, therein to satisfy that yearning for silence and recollection which torments great souls under the pressure of exterior affairs. She occupied the leisure it afforded in finishing certain works relative to the Order which want of time had forced her to lay aside. The last revision of that beautiful book of *An-*

swers of which we have spoken dates from this period. It was at this time, also, that she put the finishing stroke to a work at which she had long been laboring, and which for ten years had continually occupied her thoughts and every spare moment.

This work we shall now consider in all its phases. It was that of the canonization of St. Francis de Sales.

Among other results of the plague was that of revealing to the world both the power of St. Francis de Sales and the confidence of the people in him. Wherever the scourge appeared, they were seen hastening, not to his altars, for they were not yet raised, but to his tomb, to his relics, to his pictures. At Grenoble, on the first rumor of danger, Mother de Beaumont, full of confidence, hung his portrait on the convent door. At Crémieux, Mother Anne-Marie Rosset also appealed to her holy Founder for help, and made a vow to send to his tomb a small silver house. At Nevers all the Sisters kissed the leaves of a breviary that belonged to him, confident of finding an infallible safeguard in the holy contact. It was the same at Lyons, Moulins, Crest, and Valence; everywhere the name of the holy Bishop, his likeness placed on the walls, his memory fresh in the hearts, appeared one of the best preservatives against the plague.

Confidence in the saint's power was not limited to the cloister. At Lyons there were not Sisters enough to distribute to the terrified people pieces of the linen that had touched his holy remains. At Orléans Mother de la Roche put one of his relics in water, and during the whole time of the plague, so great was the crowd that ran to beg for it, that they distributed more than a tun every day. At Crest and Crémieux the municipal authorities went in the name of the city to the convent church, and there solemnly vowed to Blessed Francis de Sales a pilgrimage to his tomb, if he obtained the cessation of the plague. Often in the midst of the consternation everywhere caused by the approach of so terrible a scourge, the entire population of a city would vow the foundation of a convent of the Visitation. Sometimes they would seek in distant provinces the Daughters of St. Francis de Sales, to lead them by force to their own city, believing that, through the power of their blessed Father, their presence alone would be a preservative, a talisman. We shall cite but one instance. The Sisters had been invited to Arles for the purpose of reforming a community of Poor Clares; but on their arrival difficulties had supervened to prevent their installation. Uncertain whether to remain or to return to Aix, whence they had come, they rented a small house in the suburbs of the town. Suddenly the plague broke out, and notwithstanding the prudent measures taken by the authorities, thousands fell victims. And now a man began to cry aloud through the streets: "Good magistrates of Arles, who take such care of the people and keep such order in the town, make Saint-Claire's a holy place by bringing in the Daughters of Holy Mary." The words ran like wildfire; and as at such a time men catch at any hope of relief, the city soon echoed with the cry: "The Daughters of Blessed Francis de Sales to Saint-Claire's!" The Archbishop, who had invited them to Arles, the authorities, who had long opposed them, and above all the people, hastened to conjure the Sisters to go at once to Saint-Claire's. So earnest was their supplication, that before evening the Sisters were escorted to the convent by a triumphant crowd. The plague having ceased shortly after, the people surrounded the convent, shouting with joy, and exclaiming that they needed no greater miracle to prove how dear the holy Bishop of Geneva was to God.[1]

But St. Francis de Sales had not waited until now to reveal to the world the glory with which God had crowned him, and to his dear daughters the affection he still bore them amid the splendors of his heavenly home. These revelations, which were continued for ten years, which were incessantly repeated in diverse places, had commenced on the very day of his death.

We remember the voice that whispered to St. Chantal, whilst praying in Grenoble, at the very hour St. Francis de Sales died, "He is no more."

At Annecy, on the same day, Sister Anne-Jacqueline Coste was just beginning her prayer, when she was suddenly surrounded by a light that filled her with alarm and made her think the house on fire. But her fear was succeeded by ineffable peace, and she distinctly heard these words: "We are taking away the soul of thy Father. Praise God." The splendor then disappeared, but not before she had recognized in him who had spoken the angel that had served St. Francis de Sales when she received Holy Communion from his hands in Geneva.[1]

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[1] *Fondation inédite d'Arles*, p. 355.

On the same day, in the convent of Saint-Étienne, Sister Marie-Antoinette Copier, whilst going to the parlor, was suddenly rapt in ecstasy and saw St. Francis de Sales crowned with glory and ascending to heaven. She was gazing upon him in joy and wonder when he extended his arms toward the convent, blessed it, and exclaimed: "Ah! three years hence, how good it will be to see this house!" At the time there were only two or three novices at Saint-Étienne, but three years later their number had so increased that the house, though rebuilt and enlarged, was too small to accommodate them.[2]

The Sisters of Nevers had in their possession an old breviary of St. Francis de Sales, which they had exchanged with him for a new one, with the design of keeping it as a relic. On the day of the saint's death this breviary suddenly opened of itself and began to exhale a most delightful perfume. The heavenly odor lasted for two years. On feast days it became stronger, and sometimes so filled the house as even to inebriate with its sweet influence visitors at the parlor.[3]

In the following year the same phenomenon occurred at Moulins. On December 28, 1623, feast of Holy Innocents and the anniversary of the holy Bishop's death, the Sisters were conversing at recreation about his virtues, when suddenly the room was filled with so strong and sweet a perfume that they could neither describe it nor compare it with anything ever before experienced. It pervaded the whole convent, embalming the cells, the offices, the kitchen—no nook was exempt, excepting the small luxuriously-furnished apartment of Madame de Morville, of whom we have already spoken.[1] Informed of what was going on, she ran to the recreation room to enjoy the indescribable perfume; but in vain. As she approached, the blessed odor withdrew, and seemed to flee from her. This state of things lasted several months, without the benefactress being allowed to perceive the supernatural favor. She may, indeed, have done so later, when, turning away from her wanderings, and converted to a penitential life, she became capable of tasting the things of God.[2]

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[1] *Vies des premières Mères*, vol. ii. p. 360.

[2] *Fondation inédite de Saint-Étienne*, p. 547.

[3] *Fondation inédite de Nevers*, p. 148. See also *Vies de quelques Supérieures*, p. 59.

The Sisters of Lyons, when forced to give up the body of St. Francis de Sales, which they wished to enshrine in their own chapel, claimed, at least, his heart. They placed it under a canopy inclosed in a magnificent gold reliquary, the gift of Louis XIII., who had been miraculously cured by its touch. Kings, princes, bishops, and crowds of the faithful gathered daily around the precious relic and obtained the most remarkable graces. A sweet liquid resembling scented oil constantly flowed from it. The people, roused to enthusiasm at these marvels, changed the title of the Sisters of Lyons, and called them ever after the *Daughters of the Heart.*

Nowhere, however, did St. Francis de Sales more lovingly reveal the glory that was then his than at Annecy. Celestial perfumes filled the whole convent. In vain did St. Chantal expressly forbid the Sisters, and especially the Sacristan, to use any kind of perfume. The cloisters, the corridors, the choir, the oratories were constantly redolent of the sweetest fragrance. It was like a heavenly unction, detaching the soul from sensible things and raising it to God.[3]

Still other facts attested in Annecy the sanctity of the holy Bishop. For ten years the chapel in which his body had been laid under a simple stone, without even an inscription, had been constantly crowded with pilgrims and hung with ex-votos. Princes, the nobility, and the rich of all classes offered escutcheons of massive silver, silver lamps, and gold and silver heads, feet, and hearts. The poor brought a small roll of dark linen, a bundle of hemp, two or three handfuls of corn, or a few pullets. These trifling offerings were made with so great piety by these good people that no one could witness the sight unmoved.[1] Priests came from all parts of Savoy, of France, and even from Italy, to celebrate Mass at the holy tomb, and in such numbers that two altars had to be erected in the nave of the chapel, and two new doors opened to accommodate the numerous pilgrims.

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[1] See vol. ii. chap. iv. p. 119.

[2] *Fondation inédite de Moulins*, p. 88. We think it unnecessary to discuss the authenticity of these facts. We shall merely remark that we find them related by eye-witnesses in contemporary documents, and that the papers containing them were examined and approved by St. Chantal. We shall add that, in the process of canonization, many deposed to them on oath.

[3] St. Chantal deposed to these facts on oath. (See her deposition in *Procès de Canonisation de Saint François de Sales*, article 54.)

No one appreciated more than Mother de Chantal these spontaneous manifestations of public veneration; no one felt more than she the necessity of encouraging and fostering them, by making him who was the object of them better known and loved. Not satisfied, therefore, with distributing among the pilgrims copies of the *Devout Life* and sending them to France, Italy, Germany, and even to Canada; not satisfied with having his *Treatise on the Love of God* reprinted and sent to the different convents, she commenced an active search after his letters, sermons, and tracts, in order to publish a first and authentic edition of his works, the most efficacious means, as she thought, of revealing to the world his great mind and still greater virtue.

A letter, hitherto unpublished, shows in what sentiments of veneration for her holy director, of self-forgetfulness, of deep humility, she labored at this work, and her motive in undertaking this first edition of St. Francis de Sales' writings. It is addressed to Commandeur de Sillery, who had gladly accepted the superintendence of the publication.

"MY MOST HONORED FATHER:

"Here is another package of our blessed Father's writings. It contains all that we could find, and is, I think, worthy of being sent to you. You will meet many things in them to console you and increase your love and admiration for the fulness of the Spirit of God in his pure and beautiful soul. . . . You will find thirty-four letters, which, with the five we have already sent to you, make thirty-nine. They are well calculated to show the piety of our saint, his strength of mind and prudence in persecutions from princes. We submit them all to your examination, to decide whether or not it would be well to put them in print. They contain valuable documents, which might prove very useful if they were known. Perhaps, by changing a few words that indicate the persons addressed and those spoken of, they could be published. In an old trunk marked *Old Receipts* we found an explanation of the *Canticle of Canticles.* I think it must be one of his first works, and that it got mislaid; for I do not remember ever having heard him speak of it. There are eighteen of his sermons, the first he preached. They appear to be complete, or nearly so. There are also fifteen other manuscripts, notes of sermons abridged, only the beginning of each being marked, and the rest in points. All these manuscripts, including the *Canticle*, are in his own handwriting. It seems to me that these fragments, with his beautiful letters, will increase the value of the large volume they purpose making of all the works of our blessed Father." [1]

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[1] *Fondation inédite d'Annecy*, p. 33.

We have to record here one circumstance that can never be too deeply regretted. When St. Chantal was looking through the papers of her saintly director she came across a bundle of letters filed in order and annotated by St. Francis de Sales' own hand. They were those she had addressed to him whilst still a secular and after her entrance into religion. Astonished and confused at the expressions of admiration written on the margin by her director, she shed many tears, and taking the precious package, threw it into the fire. She also carefully re-read the saint's letters, and pitilessly effaced every allusion to herself. She could not, however, prevent the great veneration felt for her by the saint from appearing here and there. But then it was that her humility shone in full light. "Indeed," she wrote to Commandeur de Sillery, "it really makes me sick to think of certain things our blessed Father has said about me in some of his letters. I am pained to see the false estimate he made of me at that time, considering what I am now, that is, in a state of complete poverty and misery, and very much in need of the assistance of your holy prayers, my very dear Father. I ask them in God's name, and those of the reverend Father-General of the Oratory and of M. Vincent. All of you do me this charity, I beg you, for I have great need of it!"[1]

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[1] Barthélemy's edition of her Letters, p. 23.

She was again very much troubled when she saw that all the proofs of the great and holy affection with which she had been cherished by the saintly Bishop had been allowed to appear in the first edition of his letters. "O my God! my very dear daughter," she at once wrote to Mother de Blonay, "I shall never again trust the examination of our blessed Father's writings to any one. I shall look over them myself, and very closely, too; for, believe me, I am very sorry they have left in his letters so many affectionate expressions. The world is not capable of the incomparable purity of this saint's affection. Well, I shall have to endure it quietly. Write to me whether, in correcting this edition, I should retrench them;—but ask some one capable of judging."[2]

Fortunately they who were consulted, knowing well that the light of that incomparable affection would so shine as to dazzle the world itself, opposed any change. Soon after, Mother de Chantal wrote to Mother de Blonay as follows: "Yesterday I spoke to the President of this city on the subject. He is a man of good judgment, and he told me that if we omit those words of affection from the letters, we take away from them the spirit of our blessed Father. He says, moreover, that he sees no necessity for retrenching anything. His Lordship, the Bishop of Geneva, says the same. Well, my very dear daughter, every one to his taste!"[3]

Whilst preparing a first edition of the works of St. Francis de Sales, she was also taking measures to have his life written. For this end she had recourse to all the first Mothers of the Visitation, especially to Mother de Blonay, who had been the confidante of his thoughts so short a time before his death. She asked them all to write down everything they could remember about the deceased servant of God, that their notes, bearing the authenticity of ocular testimony, might be used for his Life. For the actual work of compilation and authorship, she enlisted the services of His Lordship Charles-Auguste de Sales, the saint's nephew, and of Père de la Rivière, a Minim, both endowed with fine powers of conception, pleasing simplicity, and very tender love for him whose history they were to write. Whilst they worked, she assisted them with her advice, related to them in detail the facts that she herself had witnessed, and read over with them at the parlor grate the different chapters as soon as completed. Not satisfied with offering her own prayers for their success, she wrote a circular letter to all the convents of the Order, soliciting in their behalf a general Communion from each community. We see by Mother de Chantal's earnestness that she felt the writing of a saint's life a very responsible undertaking, one that has need of help from Heaven to relate the mysterious operations of God in the souls of His elect. "Oh," she used to say, "if God does not shed His light upon them, they will never be able to speak of our saint as they should." [1]

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[1] Barthélemy's edition of her Letters, p. 23.

[2] Migne edition of her Letters, p. 1198.

[3] Migne edition, p. 1225.

To publish the writings and actions of St. Francis de Sales was not enough for Mother de Chantal. In her opinion, the holy Bishop of Geneva was a saint worthy not only of being known, but also of being placed upon our altars for the veneration of all Christians. The miracles daily wrought at his tomb loudly proclaimed it and, still more, her own heart told her the same. For eighteen years she had gazed into the depths of his beautiful soul, and she saw there not a single sentiment, even the most secret, that was not worthy of admiration. All therein was sublime. Consequently, in less than three years after his death, she had begun the necessary steps for his canonization. She held long conversations upon the subject with His Lordship Jean-François de Sales, the saint's brother, and his successor in the see of Geneva. She wrote about it to the principal members of the Chapter of Annecy, to the Council and Syndics of the city and even to the Duke of Savoy. It was in consequence of her earnest pursuit of the matter that a first inquiry, commenced at Annecy and in the Chablais, carried to Rome by the Barnabite, Dom Juste Guérin, a very pious and zealous admirer of St. Francis de Sales, and examined by the Congregation of Rites, finally led, in 1626, four years after the saint's death, to the nomination of three Apostolic Commissaries to take information upon the virtues and miracles of the holy Bishop. The Commissaries appointed were Monseigneur André Frémyot, Archbishop of Bourges, Monseigneur Jean-Pierre Camus, Bishop of Belley, and M. Georges Namus, Doctor and Canon of Louvain. Their meetings were held in the parlor of the Visitation of Annecy, and during the course of the year 1627 they received numerous depositions, the most important of which was incontestably that of Mother de Chantal. She commenced on Tuesday, July 27th, and continued until August 3d, without other interruption than the intervening Sunday. She daily devoted to it six hours, three in the morning and three in the afternoon.

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[1] Migne edition of her Letters, p. 1223.

The *procès-verbal* of her deposition commences thus:

"In the name of God. Amen.

"In the year 1627, the 10th indiction, on the 27th of July, at eight o'clock in the morning, the day a feria, prevented by no feast, but juridical, in the fourth year of the pontificate of our Holy Father, Pope Urban VIII., in presence of the most illustrious and most reverend Lords André Frémyot, Archbishop of Bourges, and Jean-Pierre Camus, Bishop of Belley, and Very Reverend Georges Namus, Prothonotary Apostolic, all three judges delegated by the Sacred Congregation of Rites to draw up, by Apostolic authority, the process of the holiness of life and the miracles of the servant of God, François de Sales, Bishop of Geneva; the said judges being seated upon their tribunal in the parlor of the convent of Annecy, the place chosen and assigned by them to receive the oaths and depositions of the devout religious of the same convent of the Visitation . . . . appeared Jeanne-Françoise Frémyot, first religious of the Institute of the Visitation, who, on account of her great virtues, has been the Foundress of ten convents of the same Institute . . . . who, after having been admonished by the sub-delegate judges of the enormity of perjury, swore, in the presence of the said judges, her hand upon her breast, to tell the truth without being influenced by any motive of hatred, favor, profit, or any other human consideration. After this she was examined as follows:

"Interrogated as to her name, country, profession, and age, she answered:

"'My name is Jeanne-Françoise Frémyot, commonly called De Chantal. I am a native of Dijon, capital of the duchy of Burgundy, and I am fifty-five years old. I am a daughter of the Honorable Bénigne Frémyot, second President of the Parliament of Dijon, and of Lady Marguerite de Berbisey, and I am the first member and the first Mother Superioress of the Order of the Visitation of Our Lady, and, in this quality, the first spiritual daughter of Blessed François de Sales, our Founder.'

"Interrogated as to whether she had confessed and received Holy Communion at Easter or at other times, she answered:

"'I usually go to confession twice a week. Our Rule requires us to receive Holy Communion on Sundays and feasts and on Thursdays; and by the advice and direction of the said blessed Father, our Founder, I communicate every day. I have just left the Holy Table.'

"Interrogated as to whether she was not influenced by some human motive, she replied:

"'I am urged to this deposition by no other motive than to render testimony to the truth and to glorify God, who daily shows Himself admirable in His saints.'

"Interrogated as to whether she knew the enormity of perjury, she answered:

"'Yes, indeed. I know that perjury is a very great and heinous crime, and I would on no account commit it.'"

These preliminaries over, they put to Mother de Chantal fifty-five questions, which comprehended the whole life, the virtues, works, and miracles of St. Francis de Sales. She took forty-two hours to answer them, which she did in her own clear, firm, and precise manner, and with that intimate knowledge of the holy Bishop's heart that none other possessed in the same degree. These *depositions* have been recently published and received with genuine enthusiasm by the best judges as well as by all devout souls.[1] "No," exclaimed one of St. Francis de Sales' latest successors, Monseigneur Rey, Bishop of Annecy, "I shall never be able to express the impression made upon me by those charming pages. The heart burns whilst reading their divinely enchanting lines. The eyes fill with tears of sweet emotion, and the furnace of love before us, like the sun, enlightens, warms, and strengthens him who thus stands face to face with this beautiful soul. . . . A thousand times I repeat it, and with truth, that it is in the depositions of St. Chantal the true life of our saint is found." [2]

The first inquiry had been closed and sent to Rome, when the plague, described in the preceding chapter, broke out. The judges separated, and the process was suspended for three or four years. But in 1631, when there was room to hope for a cessation of the scourge, Mother de Chantal, anxious to finish so important a work, wrote to the Commissaries, conjuring them to meet again as soon as possible. They were not able to do so till 1632. Archbishop Frémyot returned to Annecy almost in a dying state, preferring to risk his life rather than delay by his sickness an affair so interesting to him. Many distinguished personages, among them the Prince and Princess de Carignan, also hastened to Annecy, to be present at the opening of the tomb for the identification of the relics. On August 4, 1632, at half-past three in the afternoon, the judges repaired to the church of the Visitation to preside at the ceremony. The church doors were closed; but the people, gathered in crowds outside, were impatiently knocking at them and scrambling up the walls in their efforts to get a peep through the windows at what was going on inside. Only a few of the most distinguished had been admitted into the interior of the church. The Sisters, Mother de Chantal at their head, were standing behind the grate, their veils raised, their hearts beating with joy and emotion.

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[1] We owe this publication to the zeal of the late deeply regretted Abbé de Baudry.

[2] Letter of Monseigneur Rey to M. Abbé de Baudry, January 27, 1837.

M. Ducrest, the Notary Apostolic, first read aloud the rescript of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, dated February 27, 1627, by which Monseigneur André Frémyot, Archbishop of Bourges, Jean-Pierre Camus, Bishop of Belley, and the Rev. Georges Namus, Doctor of Louvain, were appointed Apostolic Commissaries to inquire into the life of the servant of God, François de Sales. After the reading of the rescript, the Commissaries approached the open grate and commanded the Sisters, in the name of the Holy See, to answer truthfully whatever questions might be put to them. Mother de Chantal, in the name of the whole community, took a solemn oath to do so.

The first question of the Commissaries related to the place in which the holy body had been placed. Mother de Chantal answered that on June 10, 1623, it was put into the tomb that they saw at the epistle side of the altar; that it was clothed in an alb with a chasuble, stole, and mitre of white taffeta; upon the last named was fastened a paper containing the name of the deceased, the day of his death, and that of his entombment. On approaching the tomb to examine it the Commissaries perceived hanging around it numerous lamps, arms, heads and hearts of gold or silver, as well as tablets and inscriptions. When interrogated upon the subject, Mother de Chantal explained that they were gifts offered in memory of the servant of God by pilgrims, not only from the environs, but also from the most distant provinces of France and Italy, who, having been cured through the merits of the saint, had left these proofs of their gratitude in his chapel.

Then, at the request of the Rev. Père Dom Juste Guérin, Procurator of the cause, the judges made a list of them. They had already counted in the sanctuary, around the tomb, more than two hundred and fifty votive offerings of gold and silver, when, casting their eyes toward the nave, they beheld it ornamented on both sides down to the very door, with flambeaux, little marble statues, paintings, crutches, and walking-sticks, eloquent witnesses of the multitude of invalids who had found health at the holy tomb. Whole cities were there represented, some acknowledging their preservation from the plague, others from heresy, through the intercession of the great servant of God, François de Sales. What more could be desired? All were impatient to contemplate the features of him whose sanctity no one doubted; but the judges paused once more. It was to cast a glance upon the tomb itself. The steps were already worn by the knees and lips of pilgrims, and the marble had been scraped and broken off in pieces by the people, eager to carry away with them some particles. The workmen then advanced. After removing the tombstone they lifted out the double coffin and placed it on the altar steps. The wooden coffin was broken, but the leaden case was secure. When the lid was only half removed a cry arose: "There he is! There is the blessed Francis de Sales!" It was, indeed, he. He was reposing in his coffin as on a couch, his vestments intact, although a little yellowish from the dampness of the place; the body entire, incorrupt and unchanged; the face perfectly preserved, excepting that the eyes were a little sunken under the lids; the beard and hair as firm as those of a living man. They examined his hands and found them wanting neither skin nor nails. His arms were so flexible that they could be bent at will. The face, above all, looked as if still full of life, and wore an expression of peace and holy serenity that inspired even the coldest with devotion. A sweet odor, like that which had so often embalmed the convent, arose from the precious remains, and bore with it all hearts to God.

Whilst the fortunate witnesses of this holy scene were indulging their feelings of veneration, the people outside, perceiving the ineffable fragrance, knocked still more violently at the doors, raised a great clamor, and, despite the efforts of the Prince's guards, attempted to enter the church by force. Then arose from the crowd a cry: "We will see our Bishop, or die!" Some, bringing ladders, succeeded in reaching the windows, and, catching a glimpse of the saint, devoutly joined their hands. Others, excited by this spectacle, again attacked the doors, and this time so vigorously as to lift one of them off its hinges. In an instant, in spite of the efforts of the guards and even of the Bishops, the church was invaded by the multitude. It was a moving spectacle—that crowd uttering cries of joy at sight of the holy remains, pointing to them, declaring that they did, indeed, recognize them, and touching them with their rosaries, crucifixes, handkerchiefs, and bracelets. Night came on, and the Archbishop of Bourges, having made a sign with his hand, raised his voice and commanded the people to leave the church, under penalty of excommunication. He was instantly obeyed.

What was St. Chantal doing all this time? She was kneeling close to the grate, her eyes fixed upon the holy body, with a countenance so inflamed and so modest, one could hardly decide whether it was love or humility that entranced her. She saw not the Sisters, felt not that they were crowding around her on every side. Whilst they were pressing close to the grate in their efforts to see, she knelt motionless, as if in ecstasy.

That evening, about seven or eight o'clock, after all had retired, Mother de Chantal returned with her community and spent several hours in prayer before the holy relics. It was then that she made that celebrated act of obedience which was recompensed by so great a miracle. When the people had burst into the church, the Commissaries Apostolic had forbidden them, under penalty of excommunication, to touch the holy body. Mother de Chantal, taking to herself a prohibition not meant for her, refrained from kissing the saint's hand. But next day, having obtained permission, she approached the body and was in the act of pressing her lips upon his hand, when the arm was lifted and laid upon her head with a gentle pressure. Mother de Chantal distinctly felt, and the Sisters present saw, the miraculous movement of the hand and fingers. The veil worn by the holy Foundress on that occasion is still preserved as a double relic.[1]

After the *procès-verbal* relative to the opening of the tomb had been drawn up and signed, the holy relics were placed in a leaden coffin and this in a case of oak. The alb, chasuble, and mitre had been changed, and upon the breast of the holy man was laid an inscription, by which the remains might be verified, if, by any unforeseen event, the exterior inscription should disappear.

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[1] "Mother Rosery and other religious have solemnly assured me," says Père Fichet, "that they saw the hand extend and gently press Mother Chantal's head." *Vie de Sainte Chantal*, by Rev. P. Fichet. See, also, the depositions of Sisters Marie-Aimée de Sonnaz, Marie-Françoise de Gruel, and Charlotte-Lucie de Bertrand de Villarrousset, *super art.* xlvi.

This done, the Commissaries Apostolic resumed the examination of witnesses who desired to testify to the virtues of the holy Bishop. But so many presented themselves every day that having taken the testimony of nearly three hundred, they discontinued the inquiry and adjourned, the Rev. Dom Juste Guérin being commissioned to carry the depositions to Rome.

Mother de Chantal did not see the end of this long process. She died twenty years before the saint was solemnly proposed to the love and veneration of the faithful. She had, however, the consolation of seeing the enthusiasm of the people anticipate the prudent reserve of the Holy See, and she bore to the tomb the certainty that her saintly guide would one day be placed upon the altars.

Numberless panegyrics of the holy Bishop were published both before and after his canonization by the zealous efforts of Mother de Chantal and his other daughters. The most illustrious orators, Bossuet, Bourdaloue, and Fléchier, endeavored, in turn, to depict St. Francis de Sales, the most amiable of all the saints. "But," says an eminent critic of the present century, "there is one who has spoken of St. Francis de Sales better even than Bossuet, who has written of him in language clearer, in words more incisive and animated, and that is Madame de Chantal, the spiritual daughter of the saint and the grandmother of Madame de Sévigné. They who have indulged in vain and cold-blooded raillery respecting the friendship existing between the holy Bishop and this noble and virtuous woman, certainly never read the one hundred and twentieth letter of Madame de Chantal. Never has human pen more fully described a soul or better expressed what seemed inexpressible. The light, suavity, clearness, vigor, heavenly discernment, and skill, the order and economy of the virtues of this soul, are all represented, all portrayed in that letter with firm and characteristic touch. Such pages do not belong to literature, they are too sublime to be submitted even to admiration."[1]

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[1] *Causeries du lundi. Saint François de Sales,* by M. Sainte-Beuve.

CHAPTER IX.

NEW FOUNDATIONS IN FRANCE.—THE ORDER PENETRATES INTO ITALY AND SWITZERLAND.—DEATH OF M. MICHEL FAVRE, FIRST CONFESSOR OF THE VISITATION.

1631—1635.

Monastic foundations, interrupted during the two years and a half of the plague, were now vigorously recommenced in every direction. After the terrible contagion, which, say our old *Mémoires*, effected more conversions in a year than a hundred preachers in a century, the spiritual and penitential life awoke with new ardor in France, Italy, and Savoy. The Spirit of God breathed upon souls, and drove them to the desert. From 1630 to 1640, a decade that forms, perhaps, one of the most fruitful periods ever seen by the Church, monastic institutions multiplied in unusual proportion. The convents of the Visitation, in particular, became so numerous that we can no longer give a detailed account of them. All we can do is to present some idea of this admirable movement, this immense and laborious propagation, signalizing here and there only those houses whose commencement is celebrated for great virtues or great sufferings.

In this rapid review of the countries that successively received the Visitation, Savoy, its birthplace, would seem to merit our first attention. But this province, never rich, now cruelly decimated and still more impoverished by the plague, was not in a condition to erect new establishments. Its four convents of Annecy, Chambéry, Thonon, and Rumilly needed some years of rest before they could send to Italy and Switzerland the colonies for which they were petitioned.

Let us, then, pass into Burgundy, the second cradle of the

Institute. That old monastic province, in which so many powerful abbeys had flourished in the Middle Ages, and which had at all times extended a sympathetic welcome to the religious life under whatever form it appeared, continued faithful to the great Foundress it had given to the Church. Every year it gave birth to a new convent of the Visitation: Dijon in 1622, Autun in 1624, Paray in 1626, Bourg in 1627, Beaune and Mâcon in 1632, Semur in 1633, Châlon-sur-Saône and Charoles in 1636. Every year, too, it peopled these convents with members from its old nobility and gentry, such women as Mothers de Bréchard, de Chaugy, de Rabutin, de Berbisey, and de Bouhier, whom we know, or whom we shall know later, and who are less distinguished by their intellectual superiority and the masculine energy of their character than by the heroic sanctity and heavenly beauty of their life.

After thus gaining a foothold in all the cities of Burgundy, the Visitation soon penetrated into Franche-Comté. Our readers remember St. Chantal's journey to Besançon in 1626, the ovations she received, the crowds that pressed around to touch her garments, and, above all, the sixty young girls who cast themselves at her feet, soliciting the veil from her hand. They remember, also, the Archbishop's opposition, which obliged Mother de Chantal to leave the city without commencing the foundation. This opposition now ceased, either because the plague had stirred the prelate's conscience, or, which seems more probable, because the obstinate perseverance of the humble servant, Madeleine Adelaine, to whom St. Francis de Sales and St. Chantal had recommended constancy and promised success, had touched his heart. Besançon, Gray, Champlitte, and Salins asked for and received the Daughters of Holy Mary. Besançon was founded the first, in 1630, by Mother Marie-Marguerite Michel, from Dijon. Then the thirty-six young girls, whom Mother de Chantal had blessed on her visit to Besançon in 1626, and to whom she had whispered that they would one day wear the veil and habit of the Institute, entered the community one by one, and in the order she had indicated.[1] Champlitte and

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[1] See above, p. 144.

Gray followed a few years after (1633–1634), and Salins a little later.

After Madeleine Adelaine, the prime mover of these foundations was a young girl, almost a child, of patrician birth. Claire de Cuisanges belonged to the old family of the Counts of Bergues, Champlitte, and Gray. At nine years of age she entered the Visitation of Besançon as a scholar, and at eighteen she died. Her short life was like one of those celestial apparitions, sometimes sent by God to console us for the miseries and crimes of earth. Her rare purity won for her the surname, "The Angel of Comté," whilst her humility, obedience, and courageous self-command, joined to sublimity of sentiment and maturity of mind astonishing in one so young, charmed all who came in contact with her. Taken at the age of thirteen to Champlitte and Gray, to be present at the establishment of the two convents that her immense fortune enabled her to found; received with the discharge of artillery; saluted by Consuls and Mayors, who welcomed her with speeches; greeted by the acclamations of the people, upon whom her ancestors had lavished benefits; and then suddenly surrounded by the horrors of the plague, —we know not which to admire more, her modesty or her magnanimity, both of which she practised to heroism. The entreaties of her family could not induce her to leave the convent she had just founded. Calm and courageous, she remained there among the dead and the dying. When about sixteen, and when her ripening beauty was drawing around her a crowd of aspirants to her hand, she was suddenly seized with intense disgust for the world and an insatiable thirst for humiliation and sacrifice. To these sentiments were added a burning love for God, an ardent desire for heaven, and an impatient longing for eternity, which plainly told the intelligent observer that her time on earth would be short. The cloister and the world were disputing the treasure, but heaven won it. She had scarcely attained her eighteenth year, when, after a few months' sickness, she died, cheerful and pure, already heavenly in her aspirations and intentions, smiling upon her Sisters, invoking St. Francis de Sales, and kissing a letter sent her by St. Chantal, whose permission to die she had asked. She left behind her so sweet a memory that we would fain linger upon it. But we must not tarry. We must hurry on, lest we delay our progress in the history of our saint.[1]

About this time, Lorraine, which already possessed one convent of the Visitation, founded in 1626 by Mother de Chantal, at Pont-à-Mousson, saw two others arise in spite of the terrible misfortunes then weighing upon the province, and which, increasing from year to year, were soon to arouse the sympathy of St. Vincent de Paul. Nancy was commenced in 1632, by a colony from Pont-à-Mousson, and Metz the following year by Sisters from lower Auvergne. Nothing could be more interesting or more characteristic of the period than the long journey of the Sisters who made the foundation. It took three months to go from Riom to Metz,—and in what a turn-out they arrived! They left Riom, November 16, 1632, passed through Moulins, where they were detained several days at their convent, which they left laden with gifts for their future chapel, albs, chasubles, cruets, and a chalice that St. Francis de Sales himself had used. Thence they proceeded to their convent of Nevers, which, generous in its poverty, divided with them its small store of grain. They stopped next at Orléans, where a pious lady, mother of one of the Visitandines of that city, lent them her carriage as far as Paris, and gave them a quantity of linen, a skirt of velvet on a silver ground, and two dozen finger-towels for the altar. At Paris they were detained seventeen days by the frost. But they did not lose their time. The only question among the Parisians was, who should make them the most presents. M. de Renty, the Commandeur de Sillery, Madame de Villeneuve, brought them something every day: a tabernacle and some candelabra for the altar, a trunk full of linen for the sacristy, some figured white satin skirts to make vestments, a few hundred crowns, and, what was better than all, a postulant with a dowry of eight thousand livres, and a good girl for an Out-Sister. When the cold abated, the caravan resumed its march, and continued to gather in donations all along the route. At Pont-à-Mousson they received furniture for eight cells. On February 14, 1633, they at last reached Metz, laden with gifts of all kinds, followed by wagons carrying everything necessary to furnish the house, adorn the church and, according to the words of the old *Mémoires*, ready to begin their little establishment without any one's assistance. This was a prudent precaution in a province and at a time in which, for ten consecutive years, St. Vincent de Paul was obliged to send supplies of money, vehicles loaded with bread, grain, ploughs, cattle, and even clothing for twenty thousand persons of every condition.[1]

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[1] *Vies de neuf Religieuses de la Visitation*, by Mother de Chaugy, 1 vol. 4to, p. 1 *et seq.* Annecy, 1659.

Hemmed in by Lorraine, Franche-Comté, and Burgundy, Champagne, also, became acquainted about this time with the Visitation, though with difficulties a little greater than attended its introduction elsewhere. This cold reception was owing to an attack of that touchiness so frequently manifested by the municipal corporations of the period. The Bishop of Troyes had invited Mother Favre to reform in his episcopal city a community of Augustinian nuns. She left Paris with a small number of Sisters; but when about to enter Troyes, her carriage was suddenly stopped by some of the magistrates, and she was told to return whence she came, since the city wanted neither her nor her religious. Astonished at this unexpected opposition, Mother Favre paused, though refusing to withdraw, and appealed to the Bishop, who had invited her. The prelate hastened to the spot, and there ensued a warm discussion between him and the magistrates. When the dispute was at its height, the Mayor turned abruptly to Mother Favre, and said: "Would you, perchance, do violence to the city?"—"To the city of heaven, yes," she answered with a mischievous smile, "but to the cities of earth,—oh, no!" The Mayor was somewhat softened by her words, though not sufficiently to allow her to enter. She refused, however, to go back a single step, and alighting from the carriage, she and her companions took up their abode in a small house of the suburbs. Meanwhile the magistrates were deliberating. They saw that the Superioress was clever and courteous. They concluded, therefore, that, if she entered the city by artifice, they would turn her out in confusion. Six weeks passed thus, Mother Favre still refusing to depart, and the authorities declaring that she should never enter Troyes. Energetic as she was, Mother Favre, having left affairs of importance in Paris, began to grow weary and discouraged at seeing precious time lost, serious matters interrupted, and obstacles around her that she knew not how to surmount; for self-love had ranged on the side of her opponents, and of all obstacles it is the most invincible. As soon as Mother de Chantal became aware of Mother Favre's state of mind, she hastened to her aid. She wrote encouraging letters to her "*great daughter*," [1] animating her to persevere, showing her that time employed for God is never lost, that trials and persecutions are the fruitful seed of religious houses, and that the projected community would be so much the better able to brave the storms of the future as it should have been more violently agitated by them in its cradle.[2] Encouraged by these pithy words, Mother Favre held her position, and, as patience is the queen of the world, little by little the opposition subsided, reason and faith conquered self-love, the necessary permissions were granted, and, on July 6, 1631, the little colony entered Troyes in triumph.[3]

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[1] *Fondations inédites de Nancy et de Metz*, pp. 537, 539.

Whilst these things were passing in Champagne, Lorraine, Franche-Comté, and Burgundy, the northern provinces of the kingdom were opening their gates to the new Order, more slowly, it is true, since they were further from the mother-house, and with greater difficulty, as they were already crowded with monastic institutions. But the very obstacles that for a time arrested the progress of the Visitation served only to make it better known. Up to this period neither Flanders nor Artoise had yet heard even its name. It had been spoken of in Picardy, but vaguely and depreciatingly. Although Normandy already had a convent, that of Caen, yet it was almost as ignorant of the new Institute as were the other northern provinces. When the daughter of Councillor de Boisguillaume, a member of the Parliament of Rouen, first felt the call of grace urging her to forsake a world in which she was becoming too popular for her soul's welfare, she inquired about the Sisters of the Visitation. Strange things were told her. Some said that they were so poor that they were, in fact, dying of hunger. Others added that the new Order had been instituted for the sick by a very kind-hearted Bishop, and that to obtain admission it was necessary to have some infirmity. There was another who, whilst in Paris, happened to go into the chapel of the Visitation during a sermon. The choir grate being opened, the window curtains were drawn so that the religious, whose veils were raised, might not be distinctly seen by the people. This stranger, seeing the dimly-lighted choir, reported everywhere that the Visitation convents were so dark that one could not see clearly in them. Now, all these reports so discouraged the young girl destined by God to establish the Visitation at Rouen that He Himself had to dissipate the cloud. She dreamed one night that she was kneeling in a chapel of the Visitation surrounded by a crowd of religious, who were divesting her of her worldly dress, and she heard a voice saying to her: "See, they live like angels." Long after she awoke these words rang in her ears, and under their influence she set out for Paris. There she found the community of the new religious full of fervor and quite different from the picture drawn of it. Though still very young, though admired for her beauty, and even loving the things of the world herself, she broke all its ties, trod under foot the hopes that were smiling upon her, and, at the age of twenty, took the humble veil of the spouses of Jesus Christ. Her parents assisted at the ceremony, and on returning to Rouen enthusiastically recounted all they had seen. Hence arose the idea of a foundation. After collecting means to carry out the plan, it was proposed to the Archbishop. His Lordship prudently declined an answer until he had read the Constitutions of the Order. He was charmed with them; but, alive to the difference between theory and practice, he started for Paris, and went straight to the parlor of the Visitation, to sound the nuns and see whether the meek, humble, and childlike spirit he had admired in their Rules could be found in them. The first whom he saw was Mother Marie-Jacqueline Favre. (It was just before her journey to Troyes.) He began at once by proposing to her a question, in order to test her. "My daughter," he asked, "which is better, to speak to God or to listen to God speaking?" She answered humbly that she was by no means capable of solving such a question. "It may be, my daughter," replied the Archbishop, "that you are too timid to answer with your veil raised. Lower it, then, that you may feel more at your ease." Mother Favre instantly lowered her veil, but continued to excuse herself so modestly, simply, and piously, that the prelate left the convent highly edified, declaring that greater humility could not be found. He added that he dreaded receiving into his diocese a certain class of nuns who put on airs and wish to give lectures to theologians; but that the Daughters of Holy Mary were not of that description, and that he would, in consequence, favor the foundation. To obtain the consent of the Parliament of Rouen was a more difficult matter. Here, as everywhere else, they were not very much inclined to the extension of monastic institutions. The necessary authorization was, however, granted, thanks to the shrewdness and somewhat ambiguous manner of acting of the Councillors, friends of the Boisguillaume family, and, on October 27, 1630, the Sisters arrived from Paris, to begin the establishment. Approaching Rouen late in the evening and catching sight of its steeples through the fading twilight, the Superioress, Mother Anne-Marguerite Guérin, and all the Sisters felt moved with devotion to St. Joseph. They earnestly invoked him for the gift of simplicity for all the postulants they might receive, for they had heard that the people of this city were very prudent.[1]

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[1] "*La grande fille.*"

[2] Migne edition, p. 1644.

[3] *Fondation inédite de Troyes*, p. 429. *Vies des premières Religieuses*, vol. i. p. 51.

Though more remote from Paris than Normandy, the rugged Catholic province of Brittany was at this epoch better acquainted with the new Order, to which, one by one, it was opening its cities: Rennes, whither, in spite of her, the odor of Mother de la Roche's virtue had penetrated from Orléans, and whither she herself went to commence the establishment in the midst of unanimous applause; Nantes, whose convent was founded by Mother de Bressand, one of the great "First Mothers" of the Order, whom we have not yet been able to make known; for how can we give to our readers so many holy biographies? She entered the novitiate of Grenoble in 1618, and soon drew upon herself the notice of St. Francis de Sales, who pronounced her "*une rare fille*"—a rare daughter; whereupon Mother de Chantal saw fit to treat the novice with great severity, thus to manifest her virtue, and of whom she said that there was not in the Institute a member more intelligent or more perfect. Such was her reputation at this time that the Bishop of Nantes, the great Philippe de Cospéan, declared that he would not allow the Sisters to disembark if they were not headed by Mother de Bressand. The convent of Vannes, the third in Brittany, was founded by a band of Sisters, who first settled in Croisic, but from which they were forced to remove on account of the dearth of spiritual and temporal assistance. Lastly came Rennes, where a second convent was established in a very short time, the three already existing being insufficient to receive the multitude of young girls daily sent to the Visitation by the petty nobility, so numerous, of Brittany.[1]

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[1] *Fondation inédite de Rouen*, p. 386.

Anjou and Touraine followed the example of Brittany, and in a few years two fine convents of the Visitation sprang up in these provinces. That of Angers was due to a holy priest whose enthusiasm had been aroused by the works of St. Francis de Sales and a conversation with Mother de Chantal. By dint of energy and patience, he succeeded in establishing the Order in a city so crowded with religious houses that the mere idea of a new foundation was sufficient to raise a storm of opposition. That of Tours was founded with still greater difficulty. Like that of Besançon, it owed its existence to a poor servant, which fact induces us to pause on it a few moments.

Tours, with its tomb of St. Martin, was one of the greatest centres of Catholicism in France—one of the four great pilgrimages of the world. So many parish and collegiate churches, so many canonries, abbeys, and convents had been, century after century, built near the crypt of St. Martin that it seemed impossible to find room for any more. Let us see, then, how this humble girl, of whose name even we are ignorant, succeeded in her project. In 1619 she made her confession to St. Francis de Sales on the occasion of his passage through Tours in the suite of Madame Royale, Christine of France, sister of Louis XIII., and confided to him her great desire to become a religious. "Yes, my daughter," was the Bishop's reply, "you will become a religious, though not for some time. Rest assured, God will one day manifest His designs over your soul." Ten years after, when this same girl was making her confession to a certain religious priest, he said to her: "My child, now is the time for you to recall what the saintly Francis de Sales said to you." Then, in a few earnest words, he encouraged her to give herself unreservedly to God, and sent her to Holy Communion with the injunction to return immediately after Mass and tell him what Our Lord had said to her heart.

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[1] See various unpublished *Fondations* of those convents.

She returned, in effect, and it was agreed that she should endeavor to found a convent of the Visitation in Tours. But so many obstacles rose up before her that, despairing of success, she entreated her confessor to send her to a convent already founded. "I give you to-night to reflect," replied her confessor sadly, "and, if you still think as you do now, I will go to-morrow and apply for you." The night was long and sleepless. At break of day the poor servant-girl was knocking at the door of the monastery. "I fancied we'd be up early this morning," said the good Father to her. "Go, then, daughter of little faith, and God be with you!" From that moment she resolved to persevere, to quail before no obstacle, whatever it might be. There was in Tours a very rich and influential gentleman, a member of the City Council, and one of the first magistrates. To him she boldly addressed herself. "Monsieur," she said, without other preliminary, "I have come here to help you to gain heaven." The good magistrate replied pleasantly that that would be the greatest gain of his whole life, and that he should be infinitely indebted to any one who would put him in the way of obtaining it. Emboldened by such a reception, she confided to him her project of introducing the Visitation into Tours. At these words M. Boutos changed countenance, and told her to think no more about that, as the city was already burdened with religious houses. But she argued so ably and earnestly that he at last promised to consider the matter. She visited also the twenty-four Councilmen, the Archbishop, the Lieutenant-General. It is hard to say which is more to be admired, that humble servant finding in her faith the courage to approach such dignitaries, or those Christian magistrates who received her courteously despite her lowly condition, discussed with her the project she proposed, allowed themselves to be won over by her arguments, and gave their support to an undertaking that all had deemed impracticable. On the very evening of the Sisters' arrival from Orléans the good girl cast herself at their feet, and humbly begged for the veil of the spouses of Jesus Christ. She had well earned it.[1]

Poitou, which lies on the other side of the Loire, opposite to Brittany and Anjou, gave way in its turn to the pious invaders. A country of Protestants and ruins, a country whose churches had been reduced to ashes, whose convents had been pillaged, their grates torn down, their inmates expelled and derided—the Visitation would not have settled in it at this time had not Poitou been the second birthplace of St. Chantal. It was in Poitiers that she had passed her girlhood. There, too, had lived her sister Marguerite, her brother-in-law M. de Neufchèzes, and her two nephews. It was there, consequently, that the first foundation was made. The Bishop of Châlon acted in concert with Mademoiselle Chateigner de la Roche-Pozay, a sister of the Bishop of Poitiers, a recent convert from Protestantism, who desired to repair her long years of wandering by founding a religious house. At the solicitation of this lady's family, St. Chantal sent from Bourges a small colony of Sisters headed by Mother de Lage, to commence the work. The Abbé de Saint-Cyran preached at the ceremony of foundation, which proves that at this date, 1634, he was not yet looked upon as a heretic. It proves, also, to what danger such intercourse with this able and restless man might have exposed the Visitation in its birth, had not its members been devotedly attached to the faith of the holy Roman Catholic Church.[1]

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[1] *Fondation inédite de Tours*, p. 464.

But, although the Visitation succeeded in establishing itself in Poitiers, its progress, for the time, was confined to that city. Saintonge, Angoumois, Limousin, Guienne, and Gascony remained closed against it. It was not till five or six years later that the new Institute gained a footing in those provinces. Let us, then, return to the country that gave it birth, and after a glance at the heart of France, where it rapidly developed, let us prepare to pass once more along the beautiful banks of the Rhone and the Saône, along the Alpine slopes, where we shall see convent after convent arise, not only without opposition, but in the midst of the heartiest applause.

We have touched on the manner in which foundations were made. Each convent, if we may use the expression, swarmed. When a community increased beyond the number prescribed by the Rule, namely, thirty-three, a little band started to a neighboring city, to found another house, distinct from the one they had left, and which in turn was to send out new swarms. Thus was the centre of France dotted by degrees with convents of the Visitation. Those of Paris, Bourges, and Moulins, founded in the first years of the Institute, scattered new communities around them. At the date now reached in our history there were Visitation houses in all the principal cities of central France, not only at Orléans, Nevers, Montferrand, Riom, and Blois, of which we have already spoken; but also at Montargis, Meaux, Mamers, Mans, and Melun, and almost every one of these houses received its foundresses and first members from the convents of Paris, Bourges, or Moulins. In Auvergne there were already four: Montferrand, Riom, Saint-Flour, and Puy. Dauphiny was richer still, for it had seven: Grenoble, Valence, Embrun, Crémieux, Crest, Condrieu, and Romans. Lyons possessed no fewer than three within its walls, and still had members enough to send colonies to Saint-Etienne, Villefranche, and Avignon.

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[1] Berault-Bercastel accuses Mother de Lage of having adopted the errors of the Abbé de Saint-Cyran. But this is a misstatement against which all contemporary monuments protest. Mother de Lage is always represented as a saint. Her name is in veneration in the convent of Poitiers, where she was re-elected six times, that is to say, as often as the Rule permits. Now this fact would be inexplicable had she fallen into Jansenism, since Berault-Bercastel himself acknowledges that *she was unable to gain over to her party a single member of the community, which always remained faithful to the teachings of the holy Founder of the Order.* This point was so clearly settled, in 1853, by Mother Marie de Chantal Delapierre, Superioress of Poitiers, that it is needless to dwell on it here.

In Languedoc, and, above all, in Provence, the propagation was still more rapid; for there was not a town, however poor or small, that did not consider it an honor and privilege to have its house of the Visitation. Here, as in Burgundy, almost every year saw a new foundation: Marseilles in 1623; Aix in 1624; Arles in 1629; Digne in 1630; Montpellier, Sisteron, Apt, and Forcalquier in 1631; Draguignan in 1632; Pont-Saint-Esprit in 1633; Toulon and Grasse in 1634.

But the zeal with which all these foundations were planned, welcomed, and supported was even more consoling than the rapid development of the Order. We have already seen something of it. In Aix the crowd that flocked to welcome the Sisters was so great that the house, the courtyards, and the surrounding streets were filled. For three days it was impossible to force an entrance into the convent, and the Sisters would have suffered from hunger had not the foundress succeeded in conveying food to them through the roof.

At Grasse the stores were closed on the day of the Sisters' arrival, and the people in holiday attire went out to meet them. When they caught sight of them, a shout went up as if from one voice: "See, see, the Daughters of Blessed Francis de Sales!"

At Montpellier the crowd that assembled to receive and escort them to their dwelling was so great that the Sisters were repeatedly in danger of being separated, and guards had to be stationed around the house. Next day they were visited by the city authorities. The Superioress, Mother Louise-Dorothée de Marigny, had to reply to nine or ten speeches, four of which were official.[1] The first was from the *Consuls du chapeau rouge*, an extraordinary honor paid only to royalty. M. de Bussuges, the first in authority that year, delivered the address, with many expressions of joy, gratitude, and praise, with offers to serve them on any occasion. The Canons of the Cathedral of Saint-Pierre next greeted them in the name of the clergy. They assured the Sisters that their arrival was one of the greatest graces Almighty God had conferred upon the city and province for many years. Before retiring they presented the Sisters with a silver lunette and a monstrance. Next came the Lieutenant-Seneschal and Chief-Judge of the presidial court, the heads of the nobility, the Governors of the city and fort, and the Superiors of the different Religious Orders, welcoming the little band, and offering their services.

On leaving the convent the various deputations proceeded to thank His Lordship the Bishop. The prelate was Pierre Fenouillet, a native of Savoy, and an intimate friend of St. Francis de Sales. He was one of those pulpit orators who contributed most at this period to raise the style of preaching and prepare for the advent of that grand Christian eloquence which afterward resounded throughout France. On witnessing the unanimity that reigned on this occasion, the good prelate wept for joy. "I brought the Jesuits and the Capuchins to this city," he said to the nuns. "I preached two entire Lents, and I did many other things for which the municipal authorities never once thanked me; but since your arrival I have enough to do to listen to all the expressions of gratitude I receive for having brought you to Montpellier."

The people evinced not less enthusiasm. Besides the ovation they gave the Sisters on the day of their arrival, they pressed in crowds around the convent. They had never before seen nuns, as, during the first religious wars, the inmates of monasteries and convents had been ill-treated and driven from the city. Now nothing could exceed their surprise to see the Sisters *imprisoned* behind the grate, and yet looking so joyous. Every day bands of peasants came down from the neighboring mountains, and even from the most distant villages, to see them. In their childlike simplicity they would kneel down on entering the parlor, kiss the grate, watch with astonished eyes the whirling of the turn, and refuse to leave until they had seen some of the "angels of the house," as they called the religious.[1]

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[1] Mother Louise-Dorothée de Marigny was a relative of St. Francis de Sales. To her we are indebted for two *Mémoires* (MSS.) of the first years of the Order.

Nearly the same scenes were enacted on every foundation in southern France. The populace crowded out to meet the Sisters, to welcome them with endless compliments and formal speeches; and, for some days, such quantities of provisions, dinners ready prepared, were sent them by the grandest people of the place, that they often knew not what to do with all they received. But this state of things did not last long. By degrees the general enthusiasm subsided, the crowd of visitors decreased, the fickle multitude fell under the spell of other impressions, and the Sisters were left to enjoy the charm of solitude, often also to feel the sharp sting of poverty.

And now St. Chantal's term of superiority at Annecy was drawing to a close. She had been elected May 31, 1629, and the Rule required her deposition after three years of office. Accordingly, on May 22, 1632, the community assembled in choir, and our saint, kneeling in the midst of them, accused herself of the faults she had committed during her charge. After having renounced superiority, she humbly retired to the last place, in which she remained four days, greatly edifying the Sisters by her humility. She was then sixty years old, and believing herself near the close of life, she begged her daughters to impose no office upon her, that she might have leisure to prepare for death. But, in spite of her entreaties, she was re-elected on the 27th. "Believe me, my daughter," she said to one of the Sisters, "all my senses, my whole being, my whole soul, rebel against this charge. I accept it only to please God, for alas! my child, I am nearing my term, and I have need to think of myself."

No sooner re-elected than she returned with new ardor to the great work of the moment, the foundations everywhere being made. They were being multiplied all over France with a rapidity truly wonderful, even to those acquainted with the great religious movement of the seventeenth century, which reached its height toward 1630.

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[1] *Fondation inédite de Montpellier,* p. 401.

Its extensive and rapid development was a subject of disquietude to Mother de Chantal. She never alluded to it without a sigh. "My God," she said one day, in 1633, "we have already fifty-nine convents! Ah, what anxiety I feel about this multitude of houses without means of support either temporal or spiritual!" Some years later she again said: "Alas! the Institute is overflowing! We have now over eighty houses." Gladly would she have arrested its progress. She wrote on all sides to the Superioresses not to be so eager to undertake new foundations, but to wait until the young Sisters were well disciplined. "For," she said, with her admirable good sense and long experience, "it is a rare thing to find great solidity joined to great youth and few years in religion!" She constantly repeated the following beautiful maxim, which embodies the correct principle for the extension of Religious Orders: "I should much rather that we propagate from the *root* than from the *branches*." But she spoke in vain. She was not heeded, nor could she be at that moment. The fruit was ripe and dropping from the tree.

It was now the hour of inexpressible joy, of unutterable anguish, of which Our Lord had said: "Lift up your eyes and see! the fields are ready for the harvest." Nothing was left but to turn to God with: "Lord, send us laborers." It was, in fact, not only the provinces, the cities, even the little villages of France that were asking for the Visitation. It was Switzerland, Germany, and Poland on the east; it was Piedmont, Italy, and Sicily on the south; and from beyond the sea it was Canada. Charmed with all they had heard, they were clamoring for some branches of the tree that was producing fruits so good.

Forced to yield to entreaties that daily became more urgent, Mother de Chantal chose the smallest and least important of all the cities soliciting foundations, and, passing over the demands of Turin, Pignerol, Genoa, and Rome itself, she directed Mother Gasparde Favier to go with some professed Sisters of Chambéry to found a house at Val d'Aoste.

Nothing is more winning than the simple narrative of the commencement of this humble convent, the first established on the Alpine slopes of Italy, where so many beautiful and flourishing houses were soon after to arise. An old, abandoned inn, for this reason sold at a very low price, had been hastily renovated and prepared for the Sisters. The stable had been turned into a chapel, but, notwithstanding the care taken to beautify it, it still retained so miserable an appearance that the Bishop of Aoste refused permission for the Holy Eucharist to be kept in it. From the poverty of the chapel we may judge of the rest of the house. The Sisters were often in want even of bread. The Superioress, whom the *Mémoires* term "*a valiant woman*," used on these occasions to exhort the Sisters to profit by their temporal need, and thus imitate the poverty of Jesus Christ. One kind-hearted neighbor, to help them in their misery, sent them six sheep, a gift gladly received, but which, on account of their want of accommodations, they were at a loss where to put. All day long the gentle creatures followed the Sisters, whether to the choir to sing the Office, or to the parlor to receive visitors. As the apartments had no doors, being merely curtained off from one another, there was no way to restrain the wanderings of the little flock. "And so, at all times," say the old *Mémoires*, "the Sisters had to become shepherdesses, whether they would or not. But the annoyance was well compensated for by the pious thought to which it gave rise, either of the Good Shepherd, or of the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world."[1]

In a spiritual point of view their wants were still greater. They had no confessor. The Capuchins and Jesuits, it is true, were kind enough to hear their confession from time to time; but this continual change of confessors was not pleasant, besides being injurious to spiritual progress. They determined, therefore, to have recourse to the Blessed Virgin. During a whole year they daily said an *Ave Maris Stella* in choir, to obtain a holy priest willing to take charge of their spiritual interests. Their prayer was answered, and in the following manner. One winter day the Bishop of Aoste saw two young men passing along the street. Pleased with their modest appearance, he called them, and inquired who they were and whither they were going. He found that they were French, natives of Mâcon, in Burgundy, and that, having finished their course, they were, with curiosity commendable in the young, on their way to Rome, Loretto, and other parts of Italy. The good Bishop remarked that a few months later the season would afford them a more favorable opportunity to see the natural beauties of their journey, and invited them to stop in Aoste. He offered each at the same time a professorship in one of his colleges, which offer they gratefully accepted.

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[1] *Fondation inédite du Val d'Aoste*, p. 450.

One of the two travellers was named M. Besançon. He was a scholar and a devout client of the Blessed Virgin. When he heard that there was in Aoste a religious house called the Convent of Holy Mary, he began to go regularly to the chapel to make his devotions, and he offered to serve the Community Mass every morning. It was on one of these occasions that the Sisters had a chance to observe his modest demeanor. A little later, having had a conversation with some of the Sisters in the parlor, they admired his learning even more than his modesty, and said that, were he a priest, they would think him sent by the Blessed Virgin to be their confessor. Meanwhile the Bishop of Aoste, who held the young stranger in very high esteem, raised him to the priesthood; and, as the Chair of Divinity in his Cathedral was vacant, he led him into the church and invested him with that dignity. This unexpected promotion raised a storm. The new theologian was young, he was a stranger, he had not received the Degree of Doctor. Nothing more was needed to provoke a general outcry. There was no alternative but for M. Besançon to start at once for Turin and receive the Doctorate. Whilst on his way to the examination the young priest became deeply agitated. He had not opened his books of theology for a long time, and he felt incapable of replying to the most trifling argument. He turned to the Blessed Virgin, and vowed to fast every Saturday in her honor if she would assist him. At that moment he entered the hall, in which an august assembly was awaiting him. He felt his mind suddenly illumined, solved without difficulty the questions proposed, and took his Degree amid general applause. Having thus secured the peaceful possession of his prebend, he consecrated himself by a public vow to the service of the Blessed Mother of God in the person of her humble Daughters of Holy Mary. As for the Sisters, in consideration of such an answer to their prayers, they forgot the suffering and anxiety attendant on their poverty.[1]

This was the first step taken by the Visitation toward Italy, whither they were being so earnestly invited. That which it took about the same time toward Switzerland, whence it was soon to extend to the richest and most populous cities of Germany, was of an entirely different character. The convent of Besançon had received a young girl of eighteen belonging to one of the first families of France. She was possessed of immense wealth and bore a name still greater—Mademoiselle de Vienne de Beaufremont. Her vocation had been decided suddenly enough, at the very moment that numbers of suitors were aspiring to her hand, and when from among them all she had distinguished and almost irrevocably chosen her first cousin, the Marquis de Coligny. Preparations were being made for the marriage, and a dispensation had been applied for at Rome, when, to the astonishment and vexation of her relatives, the young lady announced her intention of becoming a nun. Some, but they were very few, took her part, and praised her courage. The majority imagined coercion in the matter. They began to suspect that some personal interest had led her intended mother-in-law to influence the young lady, and the suspicion roused their fury. When Mademoiselle de Vienne de Beaufremont started for Besançon, she was accompanied by fifty musketeers and as many arquebusiers, to prevent her being seized and carried off on the road. Arrived at Besançon, she went straight to the convent, but met at the door a parliamentary constable, who had brought to the Superioress a prohibition to admit her under penalty of fine. The Archbishop then interfered. He required the young lady to appear in the church for an interrogation before the Episcopal Council and the people upon the freedom and sincerity of her vocation. She obeyed at once, and answered with so much self-possession, energy, and independence that a shout of approbation arose from her audience. Both the Council and the Parliament were constrained to allow her to commence her novitiate. She made it in the midst of trials incessantly renewed. The Viennes and the Beaufremonts were constantly at the convent. The Sisters dared not refuse to let them see her, on account of the report they had spread of her having been forced to enter the cloister. The Colignys, too, pressed her to fulfil her promise of marriage with their family. But the sharpest pang of all was that caused by her young cousin. He still loved; he could not give her up. His visits martyrized her. Every day there was some new paper for her to refute or to sign, some new scene to make her suffer. At the end of her novitiate she was obliged to reappear in the church, and there, upon an elevated seat, in presence of priests, notaries, and episcopal witnesses, undergo an interrogatory more solemn than the first. She protested that she was acting freely in entering the convent; that God alone had influenced her to the religious life. At length she thought her trials over; but on the eve of her profession the Bishop of Mâcon, in quality of relative, interfered, to prohibit the Superioress, under pain of excommunication, to receive the vows of the novice or the novice to make them.

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[1] *Fondation inédite du Val d'Aoste*, p. 446.

We may judge of Mademoiselle de Vienne's surprise and grief on learning this news at the close of her retreat, when the beautiful crown of white roses placed in the Visitation upon the brow of the newly-professed lay within her reach. She could not renounce it, and, notwithstanding the threat of the Bishop of Mâcon, she pronounced her sacred vows, the grate open, and all the nobility of the province being present. She appealed at the same time to the Pope, the Protector of religious liberty. The case was carried to Rome, but even this did not prevent certain Parliaments of the kingdom from continuing their interference. The very next day, that of Besançon declared the vows null, and a few days later the young nun was summoned to appear before that of Paris. Meanwhile the Parliament of Dôle, having learned that the Parliament of Besançon had authorized the summons, which it considered an abuse of power, since Mademoiselle de Vienne was not under the jurisdiction of the Parliament of Paris, forbade her to appear, under penalty of confiscation of all the property of the convent. Matters stood thus when war suddenly broke out in Lorraine, and the Superioress received information that, taking advantage of the troublous times, Mademoiselle was to be carried off from the convent by force. What was to be done under the circumstances? Mother Marie-Marguerite Michel soon found an expedient. Determined to spare her young professed such a misfortune and her relatives such a sacrilege, she left Besançon during the night, taking with her Mademoiselle de Vienne and seven or eight other professed Sisters. She gained by forced stages the little city of Fribourg, in Switzerland, where she asked an asylum, and took refuge under the authority of His Lordship, the Bishop and Count of Lorraine. This was the origin of the convent of Fribourg, the beginning of the propagation of the Institute on the borders of the Swiss lakes and in the populous cities of Germany. Thus do wind-storms sometimes detach its best seed from a tree, and bear it through howling tempests to distant and fertile countries, where it bears fruit a hundred-fold.[1]

Whilst Mother de Chantal, anxious, though at the same time gratified, was watching over the vast development of her dear Visitation, one of the saddest events suddenly cast, not only the convent of Annecy, but the whole Institute into deep mourning. This was the demise of the confessor of St. Francis de Sales and St. Chantal, M. Michel Favre. He it was who had formed Mother Favre, Mother de Bréchard, Mother de Blonay, and all the first Mothers of the Order; who had aided them by his advice in the foundation of so many convents, and in the still more admirable work of their perfection; and of whom the venerable Foundress used to say: "God must have loved us very much to have given us that good M. Michel Favre."

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[1] *Fondation inédite de Besançon*, p. 371.

We have searched in vain for a picture of this holy priest. Not being able to find one of the exterior, we shall try to portray his beautiful soul, so full of candor and humility.

M. Michel was born in Savoy. Called by God in childhood, he entered among the Capuchins when about seventeen; but his weak constitution, unable to endure the rigor of that Order, forced him to leave after having worn the habit several months. He entered among the secular clergy, and was ordained by St. Francis de Sales. Some time after, having gone to Annecy to learn plain chant, he went into the church one morning just as the Bishop was ascending the altar-steps for Mass. As only one of his almoners was present, M. Michel was offered a surplice to assist the prelate. The Holy Sacrifice over, St. Francis de Sales bade him dine at the episcopal residence. He did so, and remained there three days, not daring to leave without the saint's telling him, a thing of which the latter never thought. He was, in fact, well pleased to see him in his house, for he remarked in the demeanor of the young priest modesty truly sacerdotal and piety very extraordinary. After studying him attentively and finding him sincere, he said to him one day: "M. Michel, would you be willing to take charge of a Bishop's conscience?" The young priest reflected a moment, and then replied as wisely as humbly: "Yes, my Lord, of a Bishop such as you; otherwise, I should dread the burden." From that day the saint took him for his confessor. M. Michel was not quite twenty-five at the time.

This was in 1610. The Visitation had just commenced, and St. Francis de Sales thought that a better director could not be found for it than this young priest, already so mature in virtue and learned in the things of God. He appointed him the first confessor of the Congregation, that he who heard the father's confession might receive that of the children also.

M. Michel was thenceforward so closely connected with the Visitation that it would be impossible to recount all the services he rendered it. In the beginning of an institution there is necessarily a great amount of writing to be done. The devoted confessor of the first Sisters of the Visitation took upon himself to write and transcribe many copies of the same things; for example, the Rules, Constitutions, Directory, Ceremonial, and Custom-Book. Nor was this all. As they were too poor to procure breviaries for all, good M. Michel copied for each Sister the whole Office in small books, and that so neatly and carefully that they were as convenient as printed ones.

When the Order began to extend and foundations became frequent, it was generally M. Michel who accompanied the Sisters, rendering them a thousand kind services and edifying them by his charity, spirituality, and that regularity in his devotions which made him like a religious. Early in the morning he made an hour's prayer, and in the evening, after Vespers and Compline, another half-hour, generally at the time marked for the community. He said his Rosary every day, frequently raised his mind to God, and lived in the constant practice of solid virtue. How could he be other than dear to the community? It would be hard to decide whether he or the Sisters practised more perfectly that point of the Constitutions which requires the latter to look upon the confessor as the visible angel of the convent and admonishes the former to respect the Sisters as the consecrated spouses of Christ.

His instructions in the sacred tribunal were so full of unction, so solid in their brevity, that they who had the incomparable happiness to confess to the Bishop of Geneva used to say that they scarcely felt his loss, so deeply had this holy priest imbibed the maxims of his saintly master. On festivals he would sometimes say a few pious words to the Sisters, in which they often found sufficient matter for the subject of their prayer. He celebrated Mass with extraordinary devotion, taking for it neither too long nor too short a time, in imitation of St. Francis de Sales, who had, indeed, found the golden mean in all things. In one word, as God bestows special graces and talents upon the first instruments He employs in any extraordinary undertaking, it must be admitted that, having chosen this holy priest for the first confessor of a Religious Order, He had given him all the virtues and qualifications necessary for the important office.

M. Favre exercised it for twenty-three years, and then lay down to die, for he knew that his hour had come. The day on which he was attacked by his last illness he spent nearly an hour in the parlor with Sister Marie-Antoinette de Rosery, hat in hand, notwithstanding her earnest entreaty that he would put it on. He was accustomed to treat all the Sisters with holy respect; and when he was told that he exceeded in this practice, he would relate some example either of the reverence with which the Israelites regarded the Ark, or of the humility of St. Francis de Sales, whose name was ever in his heart and on his lips.

His illness was at once declared mortal. When told that he would probably die, St. Chantal exclaimed: "Does God will me to see this, also?" Then closing her eyes and clasping her hands, she repeated several times: "His holy will be done!" That evening, on leaving meditation, she said to the Sisters: "Another sacrifice! This holy man is going to his eternal rest with his dear Master. I had no sweeter consolation in this world than to converse with this good son of my blessed Father; but since God wills him to die, I must not wish him to live."

She then began to pray for him, and directed the community to do the same, for M. Michel had all his life a very timorous conscience. He never could think of death without trembling at the judgments of God. St. Chantal wrote him a little note to inspire him with confidence in God's mercy. Her words so affected and consoled him that he wrote back telling her not to be anxious about him, that all his fears had vanished, and that his soul was in peace and holy indifference in God both as to life or death. After making his confession to Rev. Père Dom Juste Guérin, he sent him to ask pardon of the community in his name for not having faithfully served the spouses of Jesus Christ.

Feeling death approaching, he thought it his duty for the honor of God and of His saints to declare his opinion of St. Chantal, whose conscience he had directed for twenty-three years. "Ah!" he said, "the bed of death is the pulpit of truth. It is my sincere opinion that our worthy Mother is one of the greatest servants of God now upon earth. For twenty-three years I have admired in her a conscience purer, brighter, clearer than crystal. It has always been my desire to write something about her, but I have been deterred by the consciousness of my own unworthiness, and by having often heard our blessed Father say that he was not worthy to speak of that holy woman; therefore I have been silent."

Toward evening on Holy Thursday he suddenly turned to those present and exclaimed: "Adieu!" and extending his arms in the form of a cross lost consciousness. They thought him dead, and went in haste to inform the community; but he was in a swoon caused by divine love. On putting the ear to his lips, he was heard saying: "My God, pardon me! *Ecce homo! Ecce homo!*" And: "O beautiful city! O noble city!"—Then suddenly recovering from this state he exclaimed: "We shall go, we shall go this night to the nuptial feast."

His Lordship, Jean-François de Sales, arrived at this moment, and seeing him radiant with holy joy, actually cheering up those around him, he desired to give him some commissions for St. Francis de Sales, whom he would soon see in heaven. But the humble priest shrank back into the abyss of his humility, saying: "Alas! my Lord, I do not deserve to be recognized by him as one of his servants and children, since I have profited so little by his example and advice."

He joyfully received his Bishop's blessing and begged him to be the bearer of his last farewell to Mother de Chantal and her community, to whose prayers he again commended himself.

His malady had exhausted his strength without diminishing his fervor. His last thoughts were of the Blessed Virgin. He incessantly repeated: "*Maria, mater gratiæ.*" A clergyman present asked him whether he thought Our Lady would assist him. "Ah, can you doubt it?" was the prompt answer. He seemed astonished at such a thought of that kind Mother. At last, strengthened by the sacraments, full of faith, hope, and charity, rich in virtue, and only forty-eight years old, he gave back his soul to his Redeemer at midnight between Holy Thursday and Good Friday, which fell that year on the feast of the Annunciation and the Incarnation of the Word. "And what can we think of this holy soul," add the old manuscripts from which we copy, "except that, having passed away between these two ineffable mysteries, having, as it were, fallen into these two arms of the love of the Well-Beloved, it found entrance into the eternal dwelling-place of Him who had on that same day taken life and relinquished it for us."

On Good Friday evening he was buried, according to his desire, in the church of the Visitation. It was the 25th of March, 1634. On leaving the choir after the funeral St. Chantal wrote the following words: "M. Michel, our very dear confessor, is at rest with the saints." [1]

One of the last wishes of this holy priest was to see at Annecy a second convent of the Visitation. Two days after his death, on Easter Sunday, 1634, St. Chantal was called to the parlor, where she found awaiting her a crowd of young girls. They knelt down on her entrance and asked for the religious habit. Surprised at first, but soon convinced that her holy confessor had obtained in heaven what he had so desired on earth, and that he had sent this little army of postulants, she encouraged them to persevere, and from that day the foundation of a second house at Annecy was decided upon. Shortly after, whilst our saint was one day at the Calvary oratory with two Sisters, she approached the window and saw at about a stone's throw the small house called "The Gallery," in which the Institute had commenced, and in which St. Francis de Sales had given her the holy habit. It was redolent of the sweetest reminiscences, and the very sight of it awakened in her the desire to return to it. She at once resolved to establish in it the second convent. Unfortunately, the house had been sold, and the proprietor was unwilling to part with it at any price. Our saint was, therefore, forced to take a house near "The Gallery," and which could later on be connected with it. The site chosen, she took the steps necessary to obtain the requisite permissions for the establishment. But who would believe that in the little town of Annecy, which had for so many years enjoyed the presence of St. Francis de Sales, and which the Catholic world envied the possession of his blessed remains, in that little, unknown corner, the cradle of a Religious Order, in which Mother de Chantal shone like a star, and whence had gone forth Mother Favre, Mother de Bréchard, Mother de Blonay,—all those great and holy women, the honor of whose possession France and Italy disputed,—there arose a general insurrection as soon as there was question of founding within its limits a second convent of the Visitation. Nothing was heard but calumnies and threats against our saint, if she dared proceed in the matter. They abused her publicly, and even went so far as to send defamatory libels to the Court of Savoy. Such was the violence of the storm that it sensibly affected Mother de Chantal, usually so calm and firm, though it did not deter her from her undertaking. When the materials were ready she ordered the work to be commenced. Nor did her opponents desist from their persecution. Unable to prevent the saintly Foundress from building her convent, for she had received permission from the Court of Savoy, they continued to mock and ridicule. The better disposed declared that she had lost her senses. Ah, no one is a prophet in his own country! The great works of Christianity, to be durable, must be conceived in humiliation and brought forth in suffering.

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[1] These particulars have been taken from two contemporary manuscripts, viz.: *Fondation du premier Monastère d'Annecy*, by Mother de Chaugy, *Mémoires de la Mère Louise-Dorothée de Marigny.*

When the storm had raged for a time, after shaking, but without destroying, St. Chantal's courage, God caused His sun to rise. The clouds dispersed, and they who had so ridiculed her when its corner-stone was laid, assisted with evident approbation at the solemn benediction of the new convent.[1] The Sisters took possession on Trinity Sunday, June 11, 1634, the anniversary of the day on which, twenty-four years previously, St. Chantal with Mothers Favre and de Bréchard had, almost on the same site, commenced their Institute. Twenty-four years only had elapsed, and this second convent of the Visitation in Annecy was already the sixty-fifth of the Order.

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[1] *Fondation inédite du second Monastère d'Annecy.*

CHAPTER X.

SERVICES RENDERED BY THE VISITATION TO INDIVIDUALS AND TO SOCIETY IN GENERAL.—VOCATION OF MOTHER DE CHAUGY.

Whence came that universal and rapid propagation of the Visitation? Evidently from the heroic virtues practised by St. Chantal and her daughters; for it is to the honor of Christian nations that they cannot resist the attraction of great holiness. But this propagation had still another cause. It was due to the numberless benefits that the Visitation scattered around it. It is often asked, Of what use are cloistered Orders? We shall answer the question in the present chapter. We shall show what inappreciable services they render to individuals and to society. Instead of being, as the world imagines, sealed tombs whence no good comes forth, we shall see that they are sources of life, of light, of Catholic vitality. They are, it is true, gardens enclosed, but which exhale through their grates, as from a half-open urn, the sweetest perfume.

First of all, are we to account as naught the noble example given to the world by those young girls whose vocation we have already related? Beautiful, rich, intelligent, formed to please and adorn society, they tore themselves from its allurements and pleasures, and by trampling earthly grandeur under foot they eloquently denounced its vanity. At a period like the seventeenth century, when society was intoxicated by the love of pleasure, though at the same time deeply imbued with the maxims of faith, can it be supposed that those brilliant sacrifices passed unnoticed, that they revealed to none the instability of terrestrial things, that they raised no thoughts to higher goods? It has been said of our churches that they are dogmas built in stone; as much may be said of those silent cloisters that raise their peaceful domes and sacred emblems in the midst of our cities. No one approaches them without feeling the vain sounds of earth hushed in his soul. No one, even at the present day, can enter a convent-chapel or listen to the soft, monotonous chanting ascending from it to heaven, without experiencing a nameless impression, which detaches from earth and elevates to God. O pleasures of the world! O joys so short, and yet so dear! Eloquent voices have told us how quickly ye pass away, and our own heart knows it all too well. But nothing will ever make us better understand it than the sight of a convent!

To this first service, this perpetual and eloquent sermon upon the instability of all things here below, the Daughters of St. Francis de Sales join a second and, without doubt, a greater, namely, that of prayer. Would you know what prayer is on the lips of a religious? Let us, from among a thousand examples (for all cloistered lives resemble one another), choose one, that of the beautiful and *spirituel* Mademoiselle de Martignat, whom we have seen withdrawing from the court of Marie de Médicis and the Infantas of Savoy, to take the veil from the hand of St. Chantal.

Her life in the convent was one long prayer. She spent it, so to say, on her knees. The day was too short to satisfy the thirst for prayer that consumed her from her very entrance into the convent. Sometimes the Sisters, for a little innocent amusement, would not remind her of the dinner-hour; and then, unconscious of time, she would remain before the Blessed Sacrament until one o'clock, although she had been there since early morn. She was the last to leave the choir at night, and only when the Sister that extinguished the lights and closed the doors gave her a tap upon the shoulder. Without that sign she would have forgotten to retire. When seventy-five years old she used to remain on her knees over seven hours a day.

And what was she doing all those long hours? She was pouring out her soul in endless prayer. Every morning she recited the prose *Veni Sancte Spiritus* for the Pope, the Gradual Psalms for soldiers, and the Seven Penitential Psalms for heretics and bad Christians. After that she said daily:

The Litany of the Blessed Sacrament, to ask for the love of God.

The Litany of the Angels, for all at sea.

The Litany of St. Anne, for married women.

The Litany of the Passion, for judges.

The Litany of the Holy Name of Jesus, for students.

The Litany of St. Antony of Padua, for all involved in lawsuits.

The Litany of the Blessed Virgin, for girls that had not yet made choice of a state of life.

To these she added innumerable prayers for public necessities, and for all who had asked her to pray for them. This continual exercise of vocal prayer produced in her so great a thirst as to thoroughly parch her mouth. When they said to her: "Dear Sister Marie-Denise, why do you say so many prayers?"—she would answer: "God has shown me that I was created only for that."

Royalty claimed the greatest share in her prayers. Reared at court, having lived in the midst of that grandeur whose nothingness she understood, but whose seductions she had also seen; knowing by experience the fascination exercised over the great by worldly splendor and pleasure, she never ceased to pray for them. She often passed entire hours on her knees, her arms extended, her eyes bathed in tears, and when asked what she was doing, she would answer: "Ah! I am praying for my poor princes." When she heard of the death of Louis XIII., she exclaimed: "Alas! I saw that king born, I saw him baptized, I saw him crowned, I saw him married, I have seen him reign, and now he is no more." A Sister inquiring whether she was going to pray for him, she answered: "Yes, indeed, and more than any one thinks, for he is going to a kingdom into which no one entereth sceptre in hand."

She encouraged all who came in contact with royal personages (for she often received visits from ladies of the court) to urge them to perform many good works. "Those poor princes," she used to say, "have so many to flatter them! They go down to hell without a thought of it, because their stairway is of gold."

The souls in purgatory were the next great objects of her devotions. She prayed constantly for them, and she daily recited the Office of the Dead. On Sunday she offered it for the souls of popes, bishops, and priests.

On Monday, for princes and princesses.

On Tuesday, for her own relatives and special friends.

On Wednesday, for the Sisters of the Visitation and their benefactors.

On Thursday, for souls expiating in purgatory their irreverence toward the Blessed Sacrament.

On Friday, for all the Knights of Malta and others who had died battling against the enemies of the Church.

On Saturday, for those souls that had no one to pray for them.

To her prayers she added numberless devout and penitential practices, the secret of which had been revealed to her whilst still in the world, by a beggar-woman she had met in Turin. This poor mendicant, who went by the name of Mother Antée, which she had assumed to hide one of the highest titles of nobility, was esteemed a saint. She was, in fact, a distinguished lady belonging to an ancient family of Turin. After distributing all her property among the poor, instead of entering a convent, she became herself a pauper. Every day she might be seen in the streets and public squares of Turin, covered with rags, wallet in hand, begging for bread. In exchange for alms bestowed upon her, she exhorted her benefactors to the practice of virtue, and boldly reproved sinners, especially blasphemers. Despised and insulted by some, beaten by others, sometimes covered with mud and spittle, she was never happier than when thus drenched with humiliation. She was, on the other hand, greatly beloved by many, and highly esteemed by the Duke of Savoy, who always undertook her defence. Once he even condemned some of his guards to be whipped for having struck Mother Antée. But she was so displeased at his interference that she threatened to pray for him no more, and for some time refused to enter the palace. When he sent to entreat her to come as usual to the ducal residence, she consented, but only on condition that such punishment should never again be inflicted, and that the people should be left at full liberty to despise and abuse her.

Now, this Mother Antée had, we may say, but one devotion, and that was to the souls in purgatory. She thought only of them, she begged alms to have Masses said for them, and to build and endow chapels in which these poor, suffering souls might be prayed for day and night. It was whilst collecting alms at the court that she saw Mademoiselle de Martignat. The young worldling and the aged beggar understood each other, and contracted a holy friendship, firm and lasting. It was in this school that Mademoiselle de Martignat learned to love the souls in purgatory. In the cloister her devotion increased. No longer satisfied with praying for them, she began to offer herself to God, to be immolated in their stead, and thus diminish their sufferings. She often passed whole months in a state of torture, after which she would be suddenly inundated with joy. Souls, brilliant with glory, used to appear to her and thank her for having delivered them by her sufferings. Sometimes she would see merely a shadowy form before her, and hear a voice saying: "My faithful Sister, help me. I am in purgatory." Then she redoubled her austerities, and with renewed fervor offered her sufferings to God.

Once, in particular, when under the pressure of severe sciatica, she treated herself so rudely that the right hip-bone disjointed with so loud a snap as to be heard by the Sisters praying beside her. When she arose that limb was found to be a good half-foot shorter, and it remained so for life. "My poor souls in purgatory," she said, "have need of castigatory works. I had nothing to suffer, and God has sent me this."

But the cause of her most fervent prayers, uninterrupted tears, and bloody expiations was the death of Charles-Amadeus, Duke of Nemours, with whom she had been well acquainted at the court of Savoy. He had engaged in a duel with the Duke de Beaufort, his brother-in-law, and had fallen dead at the first stroke. But the instant the sword touched his person, quick as lightning, he raised his heart to God and obtained pardon. This was revealed to Sister Martignat. She hastened to inform her Superioress and ask permission to offer herself as a victim of expiation for his poor soul. "Yes, Mother," she exclaimed, "I have seen his soul in purgatory, but so low down, at such a depth, doomed to remain there for so long a time, that the very thought of it bewilders me! Alas! who will deliver him? And, perhaps, not before the Day of Judgment!" As the Superioress hesitated to believe that the prince was saved, Sister de Martignat said: "Yes, a million others would have been lost under such circumstances. He had but one moment to co-operate with God's grace, and he made good use of it. He had not lost his faith. It was like a match ready to ignite. The divine spark inflamed it. Never, perhaps, since the demon became a demon, was he more disappointed in his expectations than when he saw that prey escape him."

With the permission of her Superioress, Sister Marie-Denise offered herself to God to suffer, thereby to diminish the prince's punishment. It soon became evident that God had accepted her offering. Sufferings greater than any she had hitherto known fell upon her. Her ordinary cheerfulness disappeared, her face grew wan, her eyes were always swimming in tears, and her soul disturbed by perpetual fears. Sometimes she would run in terror from her cell, and beg the Sisters to pray for her; but more frequently she was seen standing motionless, her hands joined and resting upon the cane, which her sciatica forced her to use. "Dear Sisters," she would say, "pray to the good God for my poor prince." Her health gave way entirely. She was attacked by so great an oppression of the chest that she was in constant danger of suffocating. Her lungs were on fire, whilst her limbs, cold and swollen, refused to bear her weight. One day, seeing her Superioress shedding tears at the pitiable condition to which she was reduced, she said: "Dear Mother, do not be distressed. These marble limbs are necessary to run after my poor prince through the flames of purgatory." But though her limbs daily became heavier, and it cost her infinite pain to drag herself along, she never missed one of the community exercises. Go when they would to the chapel, the Sisters always found good Sister de Martignat there before them, either on her knees or standing, leaning on her cane, praying for the souls in purgatory, for all those (and their number was always on the increase) that recommended themselves to her. She exhausted her strength, she consumed her life for them. Her last breath was a prayer.[1]

Thus lived Sister Marie-Denise de Martignat; thus live all religious. They are always in prayer. At whatever hour we pass their humble chapels, we hear ascending from behind their grates a chant, low, sweet, solemn, which, with nothing earthly in its sound, seems to have already caught a heavenly accent. And what are they begging of God? That He will forget transgressions, pardon crimes, console sorrow, lighten burdens, wipe away tears. And surely such things are sufficiently numerous in the world to justify our allowing a few weak females the innocent occupation of laboring to decrease them.

But that is not all, as we shall see. Religious are not content with praying only; they expiate also. They do not merely entreat God to pardon crimes; they take them upon themselves. They assume the penalty incurred by the guilty perpetrators. The innocent undergo the punishment of the guilty. And it is the better to fulfil this expiatory task, this most divine of all human acts, that they live in such innocence, in virginity without stain, and in the undimmed splendor of the light of grace. Did the slightest blemish sully their soul, they would fear that their fasts, their watches, their mortifications, would not ascend to God, that their blood was no longer sufficiently pure to be offered to Him in sacrifice. This is the life that is led, this is what is going on in those cloisters, which the impious despise, and of which so many ignorant and careless Christians ask: "Of what good are they?" Like the lightning-rods on our houses, these homes of prayer elevate their peaceful walls and pious emblems in the midst of our cities, in the depths of our provinces, on the borders of our highways, wherever there are human hearts sad, stricken, guilty; and not till the last day will it be known how many storms they have prevented, how many tempests calmed, how many chastisements averted from the very souls, perhaps, that despised them most!

St. Chantal's daughters did not, however, confine themselves to these benefits. Not content with raising their hands to heaven and disarming divine justice by their supplications, they fed the poor, instructed the ignorant, converted the impious, consoled the afflicted—in a word, fulfilled through their grates and in spite of their inviolable inclosure, all the duties of Christian charity, with intelligence as to the wants of the times and the true spirit of their Institute that was surpassed only by their devotedness.

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[1] *Vies des premières Mères*, vol. ii. p. 150.

True, they were no longer seen, as in the first days of the foundation at Annecy, traversing the streets, laden with food, clothing, and remedies for the sick; but if they could no longer go to the poor, the poor could come to them in crowds to the convent parlors. There Anne-Jacqueline Coste used to receive them, range them in rows, and distribute to them with some kind words the bread, meat, and remedies prepared for them in the convent. She had wonderful tact in obtaining from friends all that the poor needed. Nor was she less successful with the Sister Procuratrix of the community. If the latter tried sometimes to evade her, she had recourse to St. Chantal, who always listened to her petition, and often went herself to the store-room and pantry, to beg for the poor. "My daughter," she would say to the Sister in charge, "give me, in the name of Our Lord, such and such a thing for our poor;" and then, full of joy, she would take it to Sister Anne-Jacqueline, saying with a sweet smile: "I am a better beggar than you. See what they have given me!"

It was our saint's wish that the poor should not be refused. "Yes, my child," was her ordinary answer when any one came to ask her permission for some charity, "yes, give alms to Our Lord and for His love." If the Sister Procuratrix ventured a remark, she was met with "Give freely, and you will find at the end of the year that your expenses will not be greater than usual." She directed the Sister in charge of the linen to lay aside for her all the old chemises, and she mended them with her own hand. Had they allowed her, she would have learned from the Sister Shoemaker how to repair old shoes for the poor.

One year, when provisions were high, she assembled the Sisters and asked them whether they would not be glad to prolong their Lent after Easter, in order to have means to assist the poor; and another year (it was during the plague) she gave the community black bread, that the poor victims might be the more bountifully relieved.

From Annecy this spirit of charity spread throughout the whole Order. At Rouen the novices put together all their watches, jewels, and trinkets, to form a little fund for the poor. When St. Chantal heard it, she exclaimed: "Ah! my heart melts with gratitude toward those good children!" At Puy the Sisters unanimously resolved to fast, in order to be able to assist the necessitous. St. Chantal covered with kisses the letter that conveyed this news. "This," she said, "has come from the heart of a true daughter of the Visitation." She carried the letter in her girdle for several days, "to offer," she said, "these good and charitable daughters to God, that His goodness may bless me, as well as them."

The charity of St. Francis de Sales' daughters was enlightened, as well as heroic. They saw not merely the rags, the corporal misery of the poor; they did not deem their debt of charity paid by giving to the unfortunate a morsel of bread to eat or a bundle of straw to lie on. Under his rags they saw his soul, and in his soul wounds a thousand times more cruel and shameful than those that disfigured his body. "Most of these beggars," Sister Anne-Jacqueline used to say, and she knew them well, "are vagabonds who, under the pretext of poverty, lead an unrestrained life. They have neither curé nor bishop nor parish. They obey no one. They stand at the church-door, but never enter the church." She used to complain of them earnestly to St. Francis de Sales. "My Lord," she would say to him, "in all your sermons you zealously exhort your hearers to give alms. I wish you would teach, also, how alms should be received, that is, in a Christian manner; for most of the poor take like beasts what is given them, never thinking of the mercy of God, its principal source." It was by the advice of this good Out-Sister that St. Francis de Sales determined to give daily catechetical instructions to the poor. Anne-Jacqueline assisted at them, constituting herself, if we may so say, the police. After the Bishop's death, she continued these instructions herself. Every Sunday she gathered the poor in the convent parlors, heard their catechism, and gave to each a trifling alms. They did the same in Lyons, Puy, Clermont, Montferrand, Turin, and, indeed, wherever there was a convent of the Visitation.[1]

What the Out-Sisters did for the poor, the Choir-Sisters did for the rich. The majority of them had been reared in the highest circles of society, and were members of old patrician families. Could they forget the dangers to which they whom God had favored with the gifts of fortune were exposed, with what facility they lost sight of their eternal destiny, and what a seductive charm the false adulation of the world exercised over them? There were, consequently, devout conferences held on Sundays in those same parlors of the Visitation for married ladies and young girls. St. Chantal herself laid down the rule for them. "When it shall please God," she said, "to provide our Sisters with a proper place, they shall try on Sundays and Thursdays to assemble the women and girls of the town in a room set apart for the purpose, and there give them familiar instructions on exercises of piety."[2] These conferences were everywhere well attended, and everywhere they were productive of immense good. At Annecy St. Chantal herself presided over them, and the people came from twenty leagues around to have the satisfaction of seeing her.[3] At Troyes and Montferrand the parlors could not accommodate the crowd of married ladies and young girls that flocked to hear Mother Favre. They used to say that until then virtue had been represented as austere, and the road leading to it so strewn with thorns that they did not dare undertake its practice.[4] At Riom not less success attended the efforts of Mother de Bréchard. The ladies whose retreats she conducted came out of them so changed that they no longer recognized themselves. With her great intelligence and forcible language, she exercised still greater empire over men. From her parlor grate she remonstrated with the most distinguished gentlemen of the place, converted heretics, and induced obdurate monks to return to their duty.[1] At Dijon Mother Marie-Marguerite Michel, "that cripple who walked so well," calmed a sedition that had resisted the efforts of the most influential personages and endangered the life of some of the chief members of Parliament.[2] At Grenoble and Chambéry Mother de Châtel, whose charming conversation recalls that of St. Francis de Sales, drew around her crowds of ladies and young girls, and scattered flowers along the paths of devotion.[3] At Tours, in fine, Mother Marie-Louise de la Mardelière had the gift of moving sinners, and Rancé, the celebrated reformer of La Trappe, when grace had touched his heart, went to confer with her, and ask her advice upon the choice of a confessor.[4]

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[1] See the various *Fondations manuscrites.* See, also, *Vie d'Anne-Jacqueline Coste.*

[2] *Réponses de notre Sainte Mère,* p. 439.

[3] *Fondation inédite d'Annecy, Mémoires de la Mère de Chaugy.*

[4] *Vies des premières Mères,* vol. i. p. 36.

Kings, queens, princes, and princesses met at the grates of the Visitation. The two queens, Marie de Médicis and Anne of Austria, paid frequent visits to Mother de Beaumont, in the faubourg Saint-Antoine, Paris, to commend the affairs of the kingdom to her prayers. They were often heard to say that Louis XIII. owed all his success in arms to the intercession of this holy woman.[5] Charles, Duke of Lorraine, who was then holding his court at Besançon, used to declare that no one ever told him the truth about himself like Mother Marie-Marguerite Michel; and whilst she remained in the above-named city, he went once a week regularly from Dijon to see her.[6] At Moulins Madame de Montmorency attracted to the Visitation the most illustrious among the nobility, and even among the royalty of Europe. We may mention especially the Duchess de Longueville, who spent ten months with her; Christina of Sweden, daughter of Gustavus Adolphus; and Louis XIV. himself, who went thither with his mother, Anne of Austria, and his whole court.[7]

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[1] *Vies des premières Mères*, vol. i. p. 212.

[2] *Vies de quelques Supérieures*, p. 157.

[3] *Vies des premières Mères*, vol. i. p. 341.

[4] *Vie de Rancé*, by M. de Châteaubriand.

[5] *Vies de quelques Supérieures*, p. 91.

[6] *Ibid.* p. 162.

[7] *Vie de Madame de Montmorency*, pp. 249–275.

But she who drew the greatest number of illustrious personages to the convent grate was a young novice of seventeen, who seemed to have received the gift of consoling kings, as Sister de Martignat had that of suffering for them. This young novice was called in the cloister Sister Louise-Angélique; in the world and at court, where she had shone with unrivalled brilliancy, she was known as Mademoiselle de La Fayette. That the King loved her and that she loved the King was a secret to no one. For two entire years their pure, touching, and altogether praiseworthy friendship had been the hope of the court and the terror of Cardinal de Richelieu. The noble and pious young girl, who possessed a fine mind, great firmness of character, rare purity of heart, and wonderful disinterestedness, who was the more attached to Louis XIII. as she knew him to be unhappy, had conceived the idea of making a real king of him. For this end she purposed reconciling him with his Queen, thus to break the yoke of the Cardinal's power. With a man as weak as Louis XIII. and a minister as shrewd and formidable as Richelieu, she was undertaking a perilous task. But longing for solitude, aspiring to the religious life, determined to remain at court as long as her presence might be useful, ready to leave it without a sigh, the wings of her soul fluttering, as it were, and half-expanded to bear her away to the cloister, she felt strong to brave both the promises and the threats of the Cardinal. For two years, then, she was the King's confidante. For two years she consoled him in his sadness amid the splendors of royalty. For two years she nobly endeavored to direct his affections toward the Queen, who was worthy of them, but from whom specious and calumnious accusations had estranged him. She tried to impart to him some of her own pride and noble independence, and lead him to shake off the Cardinal's yoke. The King smiled at her plans. Emboldened by her, he poured into her ear, under promise of secrecy, the bitterness of his soul 'neath the Cardinal's daily increasing tyranny. This was all that Mademoiselle de La Fayette obtained, and the King's growing affection for her might have ended by becoming dangerous. Conscious of this, and persuaded that time would not further her noble design, as beautiful as Mademoiselle de La Vallière, but far purer, for she had never fallen, she resolved to leave the court at once.

At the first announcement of her intention she was met with: "What! so young, scarcely seventeen, to quit the world, the court, a king who loves you, and so many brilliant prospects, to take the veil, to bury yourself alive between four walls!" Louis XIII. was stunned. When the messenger came from Mademoiselle de La Fayette to ask his permission for the step, he heaved a sigh and sank down upon his couch, as if overwhelmed by the loss he was about to sustain. "Oh, yes," said he, "if God calls her! I shall place no obstacle in her way, although she is very dear to me." As a prompt departure was insisted upon, he said in tears: "Why such hurry? Let her wait a few months. I shall join the army, and then the separation will be less painful. Now the very thought is agony."

"And, in fact," writes Père Caussin, the King's confessor, from whom we have these details, "when I looked at his dejected countenance and perceived the violent emotion with which he was struggling, I could not restrain my own tears." But virtue soon gained the ascendency, for, though weak in character, Louis XIII. was really a man of great virtue. When Père Caussin suggested a delay, he replied: "No, no. If I prevent her now, and she should lose her vocation, I should regret it all my life. Nothing has ever cost me as much as what I am now about to do; but God must be obeyed. Tell her that I give her leave, and that she may go whenever she pleases."

Mademoiselle de La Fayette had been anxiously awaiting this permission. A few hours after its reception her preparations for departure were completed. She entered the Queen's chamber at her hour for rising and told her that after having had the honor of being one of her maids, she was going to enter the service of the Queen of Heaven, that she could not without lowering herself choose a less noble mistress, and entreated her permission to leave the court. She was still speaking when the King arrived in tears. The Queen, also, was weeping. Mademoiselle de La Fayette alone was calm, her countenance beaming with the peace and heroism of one making a great sacrifice for God.

Thus did she quit the world. As soon as she had left the Queen's chamber, Louis XIII., full of grief, and unable to endure the sight of a place that had witnessed such a separation, started for Versailles without waiting to dine. Mademoiselle de La Fayette had retired to her own apartments. At the sound of the royal equipage she ran to the window to catch a last glimpse of the King. She watched him as he entered the carriage and drove off. Then giving vent to her feelings, she turned to the Countess de Fleix, exclaiming, "Alas! I shall see him no more." As for Louis XIII., on reaching Versailles, he was seized with profound melancholy. Vainly did his most skilful courtiers try to divert him. He loved his sorrow, and rejected whatever might alleviate it.

Meantime all Paris was crowding to the rue Saint-Antoine, to see Mademoiselle de La Fayette. No vocation had ever caused so much excitement. The Queen visited her the very next day, and for several days the Sister Portress was kept busy receiving the princesses anxious to see the young postulant. Louis XIII., more than any other, wished to visit her, but he hesitated. His daily drives were taken in the neighborhood of the convent. At last he resolved to hesitate no longer, and one day, without mentioning his design to any of his suite, went to *Holy Mary*, as the Visitation was commonly called. "God of chaste friendships," exclaims Père Caussin, "how sweet this day was to both! How precious its moments!" Mother Lhuillier led the young postulant to the grate, and then retired to a little distance, telling the King with noble liberty that she left Mademoiselle de La Fayette to her own discretion, and that she had the greatest confidence in him. The King replied that she had nothing to fear, since he had not come to dissuade her from her holy design. The King's attendants, also, remained in the parlor, though at a distance. No one heard what passed in a low voice between His Majesty and Mademoiselle de La Fayette. They saw only their smiles and their tears. The interview lasted three whole hours, the King standing all the time. When they parted, their countenances wore that expression of peace and joy which is born of sacrifice and is the recompense of virtue.

The King's visits were frequent after that. He had no greater pleasure than to converse with Louise-Angélique, and he always left her a better and a more courageous man. Sister Louise-Angélique, on her side, gathered strength behind the grate to speak to him more earnestly than ever. She urged upon him the necessity of bearing his trials courageously and of being reconciled with the Queen, whom he ought to love, she told him, as his dear and lawful wife. She succeeded in dispelling the suspicions that had clouded his mind upon this point, and no one is ignorant of the fact that the birth of Louis XIV. was due to her incessant prayers.

Prepared by such scenes in her youth, Sister Louise-Angélique seemed destined to console the sorrows of royalty. Whilst some of the other religious, of more humble birth and condition, easily found their way to the hearts of the poor and lowly; whilst others were encouraging and converting great men and grand ladies of the world, her special mission was to instruct and comfort kings and queens. She saw many of them at her convent grate: Louis XIII. and his young son, Louis XIV.; Charles II. of England, and his unfortunate brother and successor, James II.; Anne of Austria and Maria Theresa; the young Henrietta of England, afterward Duchess of Orléans, whom she prepared for her First Communion; the Princess Benedicta, daughter of the Prince-Palatine, who later became the Duchess of Brunswick, and whom she reared from her babyhood; the Princess d'Aumale, afterward Queen of Portugal, whom she likewise prepared for First Communion; the Princess Louise, daughter of the King of Bohemia and granddaughter of James I. of England, who, having renounced heresy, went to her to make a retreat and strengthen herself in the Faith; and not to enter into further details, numbers of the highest rank and noblest blood, who in that great seventeenth century, in which faith still held so prominent a place in the world, considered it an honor and a privilege to elevate the tone of their spiritual life by intercourse with virgins consecrated to God.[1]

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[1] For these facts, see *Annales manuscrites de la Visitation de Chaillot.* We read them with amazement. In those silent and fervent cloisters, we see queens, princesses, daughters and granddaughters of kings.

Volumes might be written of the holy influence that God gave the Visitation at the time of which we are speaking. The good begun by the conferences at the grate was continued, at least for ladies, in the interior of the convent, into which frequent entrance was allowed them, notwithstanding the strict inclosure. There was scarcely a great lady who had not, under title of benefactress, the privilege for herself and daughters to enter into some convent of the Visitation several times a year.[1] She had there her cell, to which she could retire from time to time to recollect and refresh her soul, worn out in the vortex of the world. Others, whose fortune did not permit them the privileges of benefactresses, were admitted to make retreats and general confessions, and to decide, in silence and prayer, upon any important step.[2] A still greater number, tottering under those sudden afflictions that form both the cross and the blessing of life, went thither to seek that consolation which the world could not give. Mothers who had seen their children die, widows stricken in their dearest affections, orphans bereft of a father—all fled in turn to those silent inclosures as to a place of refuge, in which they might weep at will, and find consolation in the sympathizing tears of their holy inmates.

It was this that led thither Henrietta Maria, the unfortunate widow of Charles I. of England. In vain was she offered apartments at the Louvre. She preferred to weep and suffer in the humble cloister of the Visitation. There she passed twelve years with Mothers Lhuillier and de La Fayette, whom she used to call her dear friends. Who does not remember that eloquent passage in the funeral oration delivered by Bossuet over Henrietta Maria at the Visitation of

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The facts merely glanced at here are there found in detail. With these *Annales*, we should mention the two *Vies manuscrites* of Mother Lhuillier and Mother de La Fayette. They are preserved, with the *Annales*, in the first convent of the Visitation, Paris. In them is to be found the letter of Père Caussin from which we have drawn our statements relative to Mademoiselle de La Fayette. It has been recently published by Père Ch. Daniel, S. J., under the title *Une Vocation et une Disgrâce à la Cour de Louis XIII.* Paris, 1861, 1 vol. 18mo.

[1] *Coutumier de la Visitation*, art. iii.—*Réponses*, p. 458.

[2] *Réponses*, p. 118.

Chaillot, in which the great orator suddenly apostrophizes those two Mothers: "Holy women, her dear friends, for such she was ever pleased to name you, you who so often beheld her in tears before the altar of her only Protector; you into whose bosom she poured the secret consolation she there received, end this discourse by telling us of the Christian sentiments of which you were the faithful witnesses. How often you have heard her humbly thanking God for two favors: the one, that He had created her a Christian; the other, Gentlemen, . . . what think you? Perhaps for having restored the kingdom to her son? No! It was for having made her an unfortunate Queen! Ah! I now begin to regret the narrow bounds in which I speak. Would that I could pierce these walls and sound afar words that can never be sufficiently widespread—words that prove that her sorrows had initiated her into the science of the Gospel, and that she thoroughly understood the religion and the virtue of the Cross when she coupled Christianity and misfortune! . . . Imbued with such sentiments, she loved this humble house better than her palace, and, disdaining thrones, which might be usurped, she fixed her heart on that Kingdom whose inhabitants dread not equals and regard their rivals without jealousy." [1]

Bossuet had scarcely finished this beautiful picture of profound grief admirably consoled in the peace of the Visitation, before another Queen of England, another widow not less unfortunate, the widow of James II., sought refuge in the same asylum, there to comfort herself for a throne lost and a crown forever shattered.[2] It was to this same convent of Chaillot that Anne of Austria, also, was accustomed to retire from time to time, to rest from the troubles and cares of her regency.[3] And it was not long before the young Queen, Maria Theresa, hastened to the Visitation, to weep, far from the eyes of the court, the indifference of her faithless husband, Louis XIV.[4] Here, too, Elizabeth de Vendôme, Duchess of Nemours, withdrew after the horrible duel in which her own brother, the Duke de Beaufort, killed her husband, Charles-Amadeus of Savoy, Duke of Nemours.[1] In tears, distracted with grief, she hurried to Chaillot with her two daughters, who remained there many years and left only to become, one the Duchess of Savoy, the other Queen of Portugal.[2] And that noble and beautiful Madame de Hautefort, she who had so devotedly loved Anne of Austria when the neglected wife of Louis XIII., who had braved for her the wrath of Richelieu,—whither did she retire in her disgrace, when crushed by Mazarin and driven by him from the Queen's apartment? "I assure you, Madame," she said to Anne of Austria on leaving her, "that had I served my God with the sincere and loving devotedness with which all my life I have attended upon you, I should now be a great saint." Leaving the court, she, too, went to the Visitation, as to a sanctuary beyond the reach of the favor or disfavor of kings.[3] Let us wait a little and we shall behold the illustrious Duchess de Montmorency, whom Richelieu's inexorable axe widowed at the age of twenty-six, retiring also to the Visitation. She went, first, to dry her tears; but disgusted with a world whose joys she had tasted to the full, and whose sorrows she was now experiencing, she cast herself heart and soul into the arms of God, and found detachment from all things, and the heroism of virtue at the foot of that Crucifix which she had at first embraced merely to find consolation.[4] We might cite a thousand similar examples. Those holy houses, of which the world knew so little, were constantly opening their doors to afflicted hearts or repentant souls who hastened thither to console or purify themselves, and who carried thence life renewed in the love of God. Thus was faith revived in the family circle. Thus did wives and mothers gain courage for their life work. Thus did Christianity resist every tempest, whilst giving virtues to earth and saints to heaven.

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[1] *Oraison funèbre de la Reine d'Angleterre*, part ii.

[2] *Fondation inédite de la Visitation de Chaillot.*

[3] *Ibid.* [4] *Ibid.*

It was not only among people of the world that St. Chantal's Daughters scattered piety and the love of God. Their influence extended to the monastic establishments that had so rapidly multiplied during that beautiful renaissance of faith in the sixteenth century, but especially to those old abbeys that had fallen from their first fervor and now felt the need of renovation. The celebrated Abbey of Saint-Catherine, of the Order of Citeaux, which St. Francis de Sales had tried in vain to reform, yielded after his death and owed to the Visitation its return to the fervent practice of the Rule.[1] In Burgundy a like change was wrought by Mother Favre and two or three other members of the Institute, in the Abbey of Notre-Dame-de-Tart, the most prominent of the Daughters of Citeaux, but then fallen into great relaxation.[2] At Troyes St. Chantal's Daughters were called to reform a community of nuns living in a state of complete neglect of Rule. Their success surpassed all expectation.[3] It was the same at Arles, at Blois, at Cusset in Auvergne, at Orléans, at Paris.[4] We might say that it was only necessary for the Daughters of St. Francis de Sales to appear for tepidity to vanish and the observance of Rule to be restored. In 1644, when the venerable Père Eudes, Founder of the Missionaries of Jesus and Mary, opened a house for penitent women in the city of Caen, to whom did he apply for assistance in forming the religious destined for the work? To the Daughters of St. Francis de Sales and St. Chantal. Five of them went to Caen, drew up Rules very similar to those of the Visitation, trained some good members, and returned to their own convent only after they had established a spirit of fervor in the new Congregation. And twenty years later, when Louis XIV. wished, if possible, to purge the too famous Port-Royal Abbey of Jansenism, to whom did he confide the difficult mission in which even Bossuet had failed? To the Daughters of St. Francis de Sales. And though their success was incomplete, they at least induced the religious of Port-Royal to elect for Abbess a capable woman, the only one among them that had not been infected with Jansenism. When we reflect upon this victory and the difficulties that seemed to render it impossible, we are astonished that they were able to do so much. A short time after, when Madame de Maintenon prevailed upon Louis XIV. to found the royal house of Saint-Cyr and place it under the direction of the Ladies of St. Louis, it was to St. Chantal's Daughters that he again applied to form the Ladies to the conventual life and to the virtues of their important vocation.

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[1] *Les premières Mères de la Visitation:* Mademoiselle de Martignat, vol. ii. p. 219.

[2] *Fondation manuscrite de la Visitation de Chaillot.*

[3] *Madame de Hautefort,* by M. Cousin.

[4] *Vie de Madame de Montmorency.* Paris, 1684, 1 vol. 8vo.

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[1] *Vie de la Mère de Ballon.*

[2] *Les premières Mères de la Visitation,* vol. i. p. 40.—*Annales de la Visitation de Dijon,* p. 20.

[3] *Les premières Mères,* vol. i. p. 57.

[4] See *Fondations inédites de ces différentes Villes.* See, also, *Vie inédite des Veuves de la Visitation,* p. 166, and *Vies des premières Supérieures,* p. 68.

Such are some of the services that the Visitation began to render to individuals and to society, and that it has continued down to the present. In general we form a false idea of cloistered religious. We know not how widely they cast their roots in the soil of society. From the solitude of their convents, from the grates of their parlors, they shed cheering rays, they distil refreshing dew upon many a desponding and afflicted soul. If any one doubts this, let him open their letters. What a diversity of persons, of affairs, of interests are there referred to! Let him examine in particular the correspondence of St. Chantal, that immense and magnificent collection scattered throughout the libraries and convents of the Order. It reveals the great and holy influence of the saints in this world. That humble Mother de Chantal, who had given up everything for God, who had been so severely blamed "for burying herself alive," as it was said, and thus rendering her talents and virtues useless, became the confidante of princes and princesses, who wrote to her for prayers and advice. Bishops consulted her on the government of their diocese; priests confided to her the direction of their conscience; writers submitted to her their works. Numbers of souls, saddened by adversity, exposed to temptation, tormented by passions, or consumed by divine love, solicited her assistance. She shone through the grate of her convent, like the sun through the branches of the forest, but with this difference,—she exhausted her strength in diffusing her light. Her health broke down under her immense correspondence. Toward the year 1631, at almost the very period we have now reached in our history, St. Chantal felt no longer able to bear the daily increasing burden, and thought of choosing a Sister to fulfil for her the duty of secretary.

God, who had already bestowed so many blessings upon the new Order, was preparing for it another of inestimable value. He was about to give it an historian whose style was charming as the facts she was to relate, whose wit was graceful as the figures she was to depict. We have borrowed too freely from her, she has played too prominent a part in the history of the Visitation, for us not to make her acquaintance.

She belonged to a distinguished Burgundian family, and in the world she was called Mademoiselle de Chaugy. One day, when dining with her at M. the Marechal de Saint-Géran's, St. Francis de Sales read her mind and heart. Taking an apple at dessert, he presented it to her, saying with a smile: "I know that young ladies like sweets." Then he added: "You will one day belong to us." For several years there seemed no likelihood of this prediction being fulfilled. Beautiful in form and feature, with a brilliant imagination, a mind full of sprightliness and wit, gifted in a rare degree with the art of conversing and writing, Mademoiselle de Chaugy was at the time dazzled and intoxicated with the happiness the world had in store for her. She was scarcely seventeen, when she met in her father's house a young man of noble family, full of intellect, and as passionately devoted to music and poetry as she herself. She loved him. Her father approved the attachment. One more step, and alas for St. Francis de Sales' prediction! But God was on the watch. He had allowed Mademoiselle de Chaugy to advance on the road of worldly happiness only to give her the merit of a greater sacrifice.

Her mother refused consent to the marriage. The young suitor joined the army and was killed. M. de Chaugy died. In a few days Madeleine de Chaugy's cloudless sky grew dark and lowering. To seek consolation in her sorrow, as well as to escape from her mother, with whom she could not live happily, she obtained permission to spend some time in the convent of the Visitation at Paray. There she saw Mother de Chantal, with whom she was distantly connected.

Our saint understood at once the inconsolable sadness of her young relative, and proposed to take her with her to Annecy. The desire to leave the province, to be far away from her mother, who was urging her to contract a marriage not at all consonant with her feelings, and the pleasure of travelling to Savoy with so holy a companion, determined the young girl's acceptance of the invitation. She had, however, a deeply rooted horror of convents, and she was determined never to become a nun.

She tells us herself what efforts she had to make to cross the threshold of Annecy. She invoked St. Joseph to help her to hide her feelings, and from the bottom of her heart renewed her resolution not to abide long in the cloister. On their side the Sisters had scarcely spoken to her before they were charmed with her intelligence, and they began to pray earnestly that God would grant them so valuable a prize. Mother de Châtel especially was exceedingly anxious to gain her, and no wonder, since there was more than one trait of resemblance between them! "Ah!" she said, "if God wins this heart, He will make it an instrument for His glory." Whenever she met Mademoiselle de Chaugy in the corridors, she would say with a smile: "When are you going to give divine grace an audience?" But the young girl was in no hurry. She wrote poetry and spiritual canticles, she made beautiful extracts from the instructions she heard, she charmed the Sisters with the productions of her fertile and well-stored mind; but such efforts were unavailing: she could not stifle the Divine Voice that was beginning to speak to her. One question was constantly arising in her soul: Which is the better, the world or the cloister? It was a question of import, one that she could not silence, one that she wished not to answer. She was in this frame of mind when the panegyric of SS. Peter and Paul was preached at the convent. The sacred orator praising their obedience, inveighed against those mercenary souls that do not give themselves to God, that have to be purchased, and that dare to compare the world with Him.

This was the stroke of grace. Mademoiselle de Chaugy cast herself in tears at Mother de Chantal's feet, declaring that the struggle was over, that she was now ready to obey the divine call. The saint showed more pleasure than surprise. Our Lord had notified her of this great victory. "But," she said, "I preferred letting you learn God's will through the organ of His Holy Spirit than from the lips of a sinner like me."

Mademoiselle de Chaugy took the veil in May, 1629, five years after St. Francis de Sales' death, and received the name of Françoise-Madeleine. She made her vows the following year, and a short time after St. Chantal chose her for her secretary. She never after quitted the saint, accompanying her on her journeys and writing at her dictation. Even their cells were contiguous. Placed thus in the most intimate relations with the venerable Foundress, the pupil of Mother de Châtel, who had directed her during her novitiate, of Mother de Blonay, who was later on her Superioress and friend, of all the first Mothers of the Visitation, with whom she was in constant communication, received into the Order at the very time it was exhaling its sweetest perfume, so situated as to be able to see all and judge correctly, the young secretary understood the mission God had given her to preserve to posterity the memory of so many charming and heroic facts, and she willingly took up her pen. By a happy chance, or rather through one of those rare provisions of Divine Providence, it happened that this young nun belonged to a family of great writers. Her style was wonderfully simple, though at the same time graceful and flowery. Had she lived at the court of Louis XIV., she would have rivalled her cousin, the Marchioness de Sévigné. As it was, reared among the mountains of Savoy, shut up in a convent, debarred from communication with either the best authors or the illustrious characters of the day, too burdened with work to care for style, and, moreover, having nothing further in view than to edify the cloister, it must be admitted that her writings exhibit many defects, such as prolixity, a somewhat mystical turn of expression, and too great subtlety in her allusions to the Holy Scriptures and her interpretation of them. "Nevertheless, the quality of mind is the same as that of Madame de Sévigné: the same perfect ease, the same lively and fertile imagination, the same happy gift of telling her story amid smiles and tears, the same sprightly turns and opportune expressions,—all these the nun possesses and scatters broadcast like the Marchioness. She has less amiable raillery, but more of the tender ardor of piety." [1]

From Sister de Chaugy's first page, St. Chantal understood the gift that God had bestowed in her upon the Order. Under a strong presentiment of her approaching end, the holy Foundress was then carefully collecting every reminiscence connected with its foundation. She associated her young secretary to her labor. Sometimes she dictated to her for hours at a time, or again related events that had occurred, and directed her to reproduce her words in writing. In all the convents they visited she set her to work to gather notes and memoranda of the foundation of each house in particular. At Annecy she commanded her to write down, but very secretly, all the acts of virtue she might remark in Mother de Châtel, Mother de Blonay, and the other Sisters. When Sister de Chaugy finished a *Mémoire* she carried it to St. Chantal, who revised and corrected it. In this method of acting there was immense advantage on the side of exactitude, but it involved great inconvenience. Our saint would not allow herself to be mentioned. She mercilessly erased everything that might redound to her honor. She even went so far as sharply to reprove her secretary for having spoken so of a sinner, and forbade her ever to do so again. Fortunately, such prohibitions are not binding. The more Mother de Chantal desired to remain unnoticed, the more earnestly did Sister de Chaugy set about gathering up her every word and action. But she carefully concealed her work, and, to escape being seen by the other Sisters, she sometimes spent the night in committing to paper all that she had observed. At last her sight became impaired. Mother de Chantal in alarm consulted a celebrated physician, who declared that nothing but entire rest would avert total blindness. Our saint had absolute need of her secretary. "My daughter," she said to her one evening, "I see that the doctor is right, but how shall I do without you? Will you not unite your prayers with mine that a speedier answer may be obtained?" She then made the sign of the cross on Sister de Chaugy's eyes, and told her to go to bed. She had hardly fallen asleep when St. Francis de Sales appeared to her, clothed in his episcopal robes and brilliant with glory. "My daughter," he said, "God sends me to cure you in view of the services He expects from you, and which you will render to our Institute." With these words he disappeared, and she awoke, her eyes perfectly restored. The whole community, headed by St. Chantal, went to the chapel and sang the beautiful canticle of thanksgiving consecrated by the usage of the Church.[1]

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[1] *Les premières Mères de la Visitation.* Preface of M. Louis Veuillot.

Sister de Chaugy again took up her pen. But her humility equalled her talent. She would never consent to publish any of her numerous works.[2] Only one appeared during her lifetime. Without her knowledge the manuscript had been taken to Rome, where it was read with approbation by the Cardinals, and shown to Alexander VII., who, astonished at finding so much genius in a simple religious, sent her a command to have the work published. The others remained hidden in the various convents of the Order, whence they appear destined to be brought forth in this century of exhumation.

Such was Sister de Chaugy, the Homer of the Visitation, a Homer as humble and as pleasing as the poem she was called to sing!

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[1] *Vie de la Mère de Chaugy*, 2 vols. 12mo, Orange, 1839.

[2] Several were, however, *printed* during her lifetime, but for the use of the Sisters of the Visitation alone, and with the prohibition to allow them to circulate.

CHAPTER XI.

THE BOARDING-SCHOOLS OF THE VISITATION.

We shall now speak of another kind of service the Visitation began to render to individuals and to society in general, a service destined to increase with the Institute, and which, better understood and appreciated by the world, was soon to make the new Order still more popular.

About the period of which we are now treating there commenced to assemble behind those grates and within those cloisters opening into immense gardens a number of children belonging to opulent families, sent there to be formed in mind, in heart, in conscience, under the direction of the Daughters of St. Francis de Sales and St. Chantal.

The origin of these boarding-schools is quite singular. They sprang from the needs of the times, from the force of circumstances, much more than from the will of the Founders. Neither the Bishop of Geneva nor his saintly co-operatrix had thought of establishing schools in the Visitation. For a long time they even refused their consent to the measure, but they were at last constrained to yield to the popular desire. Education was then the topic of the day. After the first shock caused by the number and importance of the apostates produced by Luther's revolt, by the facility with which whole nations allowed themselves to be seduced, a gleam of light shot through the Catholic world. By the lurid glimmer of the storm, it was discovered that there was but one cause of so many evils, namely, ignorance of religion, and but one remedy, education. Every one felt the necessity of seizing upon the children, of giving them a solid education, calculated to secure them from a similar fall, and to guide them safely over the abyss that was swallowing up the contemporary generation. On all sides the work commenced with incredible zeal. Seminaries of various grades were established. The Jesuits opened colleges for the rich; the Oratorians, for the middle classes; the Fathers of Christian Doctrine, for the poor. There was a general stir. Though the present was jeopardized, the future, at least, must be saved. Saints seconded, or rather initiated and directed the movement. St. Charles Borromeus, Dom Bartholomew of the Martyrs, St. Vincent de Paul, St. Joseph Calasanctius, M. Olier, and the venerable César de Bus, though all far apart, yet urged by a sentiment of the same dangers and the same needs, founded seminaries, colleges, and schools, and established religious congregations for the education of youth.

At the same period and for the same purpose Blessed Peter Fourrier founded the Sisters of Notre Dame, and César de Bus established the Congregation of the Sisters of Christian Doctrine. Besides these there were the Sisters of the Cross, the Sisters of St. Genevieve, the Sisters of St. Joseph, the Sisters of the Presentation, the Sisters of the Christian Schools, all of whom scattered throughout the provinces, and opened free schools for poor children. The Ursulines sprang up again in the cities, and by their activity aroused the Dominican, the Cistercian, and the Bernardine nuns, who had long been devoted to the education of girls of the higher class. The spirit of the day invaded even the old abbeys, the secluded abodes of noble Canonesses, to which the younger daughters of grand families had retired.

Under such circumstances it was to be expected that public attention would turn to the Visitation, that mothers would desire to have their children educated by the daughters of the meek prelate who, in his *Philothea*, had so well discerned, had so gently explained the duties of piety incumbent upon the secular laity. The enthusiasm that had greeted the "Introduction to a Devout Life," that was continually on the increase, that had led to its translation into all languages, that had even turned it into French verse, that had made it, according to the expression of Mgr. Camus, "*The secular's breviary*"— this enthusiasm for the holy and pleasing maxims and ideas of the "Introduction" created, in spite of St. Francis de Sales himself, the boarding-schools of the Visitation. To this enthusiasm may be added the admiration felt for St. Chantal and her first companions. They had repudiated the grandeur of the world whilst retaining their own personal and intellectual ascendency. Under their veil was preserved the graceful though humble, the elegant though modest deportment that delighted the beholder. To have the "Introduction" for the programme of an education, and a Mother de Chantal, a Mother de Blonay, a Mother de Chaugy, or a Mother de La Fayette to explain that programme—what a dream! Is it astonishing that the seventeenth century fell under its spell?

The first convents of the Visitation were scarcely established before St. Francis de Sales was petitioned on all sides to admit scholars. At first he refused. He had already changed his plan—should he again modify it? Of an active Congregation intended for the relief of the sick, he had formed a contemplative and cloistered Order. Should he now transform it into a teaching Order? The saint did not think so. "God has not selected your Institute," he wrote to a Superioress, "for the education of little girls, but for the perfection of women and young ladies."[1] St. Chantal replied to a Bishop in the same strain. "The Superioress of our convent writes that the gentlemen of your city express an earnest desire for our Sisters to undertake the education of young girls. I assure you, my Lord, that if our state of life permitted it, we should willingly do so through no other motive than the respect we bear you, although it would be a very distracting occupation. Whatever we can do in this respect without contravening the intentions of our holy Founder, we shall do freely."[2]

But fortunately, if the Bishop of Geneva was unwilling to open the door of the cloister to the multitude of scholars asking for admittance, he had not absolutely closed it against them. He allowed the Sisters to receive a few children, about ten or twelve years old, whom their parents had destined for the religious life. They were to remain in the convent "as boarders awaiting the manifestation of God's will." He foresaw that they would be a great charge.

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[1] *Lettres de Saint François de Sales*, p. 356.

[2] *Lettres de Sainte Chantal*, p. 50.

"But," he asked in his own graceful style, "which is better, to have thorns in our garden that we may have roses, or to have no roses for fear of having thorns?"[1]

Having decided upon the roses, St. Francis de Sales took precautions that they should be a source of perfume, a joy in the house, instead of trouble and disorder. For this end he ordained that only a small number should be received, and these of respectable parentage, inclined, as far as could possibly be discovered at so tender an age, to the religious life, or at least disposed to the practice of virtue and promising to be one day, by their piety, a source of joy to the Church.[2]

And so, from their earliest days, as far back as we can look into those first convents of the Visitation, we find in them children. In 1610, at the opening of the first house, Madame de Chantal had with her her little Françoise. Madame Colin, who accompanied Madame de Gouffier from Lyons to Annecy, brought with her her little daughter Anne, ten years old. Jeanne-Marie de la Croix, a niece of St. Francis de Sales, about fifteen years of age, joined them; and others, like Claude-Agnès de la Roche, without boarding at the convent, were constant visitors. Indeed, we cannot open one of the old manuscripts without meeting on every page the smiling face of a little girl by the side of the grave and recollected religious.

One day, for example, when St. Francis de Sales had called to see Mother de Chantal, the latter appeared with her dear little companion Anne Colin by the hand; for even when receiving a visit from the holy Bishop of Geneva she was attended by an assistant. The two servants of God were talking together, the child playing around them, when the door suddenly opened, and the Archbishop of Lyons was announced. St. Francis de Sales instantly arose, and with charming humility went to meet the prelate. Whilst the two Bishops were exchanging courtesies, St. Chantal made a sign to her little companion, drew her to the grate, and directed her attention to the graceful modesty, the incomparable humility, of the holy Founder.

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[1] Letters, 454.

[2] *Réponses de Sainte Chantal*, p. 468.

Another day Mother de Blonay was called to the parlor to see St. Francis de Sales, and little Anne was again taken as companion. After a moment's conversation Mother de Blonay noticed that two doors were open, and, fearing that the saint would take cold, she expressed to him her anxiety. He at once arose to shut one, but returned without touching it. "My daughter," he said to her with his inimitable sweetness, "there is a crowd of little children out there, looking at me so confidently that I have not the heart to close the door in their face." Charmed with his gentleness and kindness, Mother de Blonay made a sign to little Anne Colin, who ran to the other side and closed the door.[1]

Here, then, are children at the Visitation in its very first year. To leave them at perfect liberty, St. Francis de Sales would not allow the habit to be given them, though at the same time he himself planned for them a semi-religious costume, to remind them that they were in expectation of becoming later the spouses of Jesus Christ. "I do not think of giving them the habit before the proper age," he wrote to Mother de Châtel, "but I purpose allowing them to wear a little scarf upon the head, so that they may look something like religious. It ought to be black or brown without trimming, as I saw at St. Paul, in Milan, where there are one hundred and fifty nuns, twenty or twenty-five novices, and as many postulants, these last boarding there on trial. These boarders all wore blue, with veils of the same color, their whole costume alike." [2]

This little habit was given with some ceremony to the children deemed worthy of receiving it. From that moment they were allowed to follow some of the community exercises. They joined the recreation of the Sisters, sang Vespers and Compline, observed the *great silence* in the places marked, kept their eyes lowered in the refectory and choir; and, in fine, they were everywhere looked upon as little nuns. They did not as yet change their baptismal and family name, but they were called the "Sisters of the Little Habit."

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[1] *Vies de plusieurs Vénérables Mères de l'Ordre de la Visitation, décédées au Monastère d'Avignon*, 1 vol. 12mo, Avignon, 1684, p. 58.

[2] Letter 454. This little costume is described more in detail by St. Chantal: "A black dress shall be given them, quite plain, fitting to the figure, without plaits and coming up to the throat, the sleeves rather wide; a small collar without starch fastened round the neck; a very short white veil, which is not turned back upon the head; neither guimp nor binder, but a small band to confine the hair, that it may not fall over the face. (*Coutumier*, pp. 28, 337.)

We are still far from boarding-schools, our readers may say—but patience! The door is half open: through it the scholars will pass. Those little girls, limited in number, who wear little scarfs on their head that they may bear some resemblance to religious—these "Sisters of the Little Habit" will hold out their hands to the scholars and draw them in.

It would, however, be an error to conclude that in those early times there were in the convents of the Visitation no other little girls than the Sisters of the Little Habit. Françoise de Chantal never wore their uniform, and she was, therefore, the first and oldest pupil of the Visitation. Anne Colin, on the contrary, soon received it. "The venerable Mother de Chantal," says an old historian of the Order, "conceived special affection for this dear child. She gave her the little habit, which made her the first of the Order who wore the preparatory veil before receiving that of the novitiate. Our dear little Anne wore it with such innocence and love as merited for her wonderful progress and perseverance."[1] We have here in the first two children who entered the Visitation the real origin of the boarding-schools under their two chief forms: the Sisters of the Little Habit and the scholars properly so called.

St. Francis de Sales and Mother de Chantal had, at first, hesitated to admit children into their Order, and they took great precautions to restrict the number, since they feared that such a charge would embarrass and distract the religious.[2] But this fear disappeared with time. It gradually became apparent that, if such an employment had its inconveniences, there were, also, even for the Sisters themselves, real advantages to be derived from it; that after the period of the numerous foundations, the young and active members of the different communities would find in this duty occupation for mind and heart, something upon which to exercise their zeal, and that, if well conducted, it would not interfere with the perfection of the contemplative life. For these reasons Mother de Chantal, who had at first refused to countenance boarding-schools in the Order, withdrew her opposition. She wrote to the Archbishop of Tarantaise: "As to the little girls, my Lord, whom your illustrious Lordship wishes them to receive, our Sisters will follow your advice, since I am sure, my Lord, that you will not object to their number being limited, and that they be not so young as to be incapable of receiving instructions in piety and matters appertaining to a good education. In this point we rely upon your judgment and holy paternal affection."[1] About the same time she exhorts Mother de Beaumont to establish a boarding-school in Pignerol,[2] and directs Mother de Chaugy to write to the different convents to receive without scruple all the scholars that present themselves.[3] Toward the year 1635, consequently, there were Visitation boarding-schools everywhere. And when in the following year Mother de Chantal began her long journey through France, we find all along her route, at Paris, Lyons, Autun, Montferrand, Montpellier, Avignon, and wherever she stopped, accounts of the little boarders going to meet her, reciting poetry, and singing songs of welcome. Everywhere she caresses them, blesses them, teaches them little practices of piety, and gives them little rewards.

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[1] *Vies des Mères d'Avignon*, p. 58.

[2] *Lettres de la Mère de Chaugy*, 14 and 15.

Not only did the number of children educated at the Visitation increase, but the sweet spirit of St. Francis de Sales, the strong, grand spirit of St. Chantal began to penetrate their heart. They filled the convents with the first perfume of the budding virtues that later on burst into bloom in the midst of the world. At Pont-à-Mousson, for example, Anne-Henriette d'Haraucourt, a little girl of twelve, belonging to a princely family, unexpectedly learned that her mother was about to withdraw her from the convent, to make her Abbess of Saint-Pierre, in place of her aunt, who was dangerously ill. The child said not a word, but that night she cut off her hair. Next morning, on leaving prayer, she took off her cap, and, showing her shorn head to her mother, she said: "See, a beautiful Lady Abbess! I would not be a nun in a convent in which they wear their hair dressed."[1]

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[1] *Lettres de Saint François de Sales.* Edit. Migne, vol. vi. p. 849.

[2] *Circulaire des Sœurs de Pignerol,* April 14, 1857. The Sisters affirm that they found this fact in their old *Mémoires.*

[3] *Lettres de la Mère de Chaugy,* 14 and 15.

At Montferrand, Marie-Séraphique de Chamflours, at the age of twelve, sprightly in disposition, hasty of temper, who flew into a passion at the least rebuke, became an angel of sweetness from reading the Life of St. Francis de Sales. The veins of her neck might still be seen to swell and the crimson flush to mantle her cheek, but a passionate word never escaped her lips. "Let anger boil within me," she used to say in the words of the holy Bishop, "provided I do nothing to favor it."[2] At Chambéry, one day when a high wind had blown a great deal of fruit off the trees, among it some very fine plums, the little girls who were breakfasting in the garden, far from touching the delicious fruit, turned aside in order not to tread on it. St. Chantal, then at Chambéry, delighted at the reserve and mortification of the children, sent the Lay-Sisters to gather some of the finest plums in the garden, and give them to the little girls in her name as a reward for their good behavior.[3] At Besançon, Marie-Claire de Cuisanges, of whom we have already spoken, returned from the journey on which, owing to her great fortune, she had accompanied the Sisters in quality of Foundress to establish the houses of Gray and Champlitte, was asked by her schoolmates of what she had been thinking in the midst of so many honors, whilst the Mayors of those cities were making speeches to her: "Of what was I thinking?" said the child. "Why, I was thinking that, if I had been a little shepherdess, they would not have praised me so much." And on another occasion her brother and several young noblemen, her cousins, came to see her in the parlor and gave her a glowing account of the grand fêtes at which they had been present. Marie-Claire rose impatiently, ran and gathered up some dust and sweepings in the skirt of her dress, and returning, shook them out before her visitors, saying: "Here, I know all about your worldly pleasures. This is what they are worth!"

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[1] *Fondation inédite de Pont-à-Mousson*, p. 261.

[2] *Fondation inédite de Montferrand*, p. 144.

[3] *Fondation manuscrite de Chambéry.*

We should never finish were we to attempt to collect all the beautiful words that fell from the lips of these first pupils of the Visitation, or the examples of their innocence, modesty, obedience, strength of soul, that illuminate every page of the old chronicles. Such were the first fruits of the education imparted by the Sisters of the Visitation.

But they not only formed the heart, they cultivated the mind, and nowhere, it must be acknowledged, could a young girl better acquire, not great learning (for at that time it was not looked for in women), but that delicacy of sentiment, those exquisite conversational charms, that gift of letter-writing, and that intellectual taste then so much sought after, and in which, second only to virtue, consist a woman's real education and true distinction. The Visitation possessed all this in a degree equal to that of any society of the period. "As there is in the beginning of Religious Orders much writing to be done," says Mother de Chantal, there was not one of the first Mothers who might not be called upon at any moment to take up her pen. Some collected and arranged the *Conferences* of St. Francis de Sales. Mother de la Roche excelled in this work. The others, such as Mother de Bréchard, Mother de Marigny, Mother de Clermont-Mont-Saint-Jean, and above all Mother de Chaugy, who surpassed them all, wrote the history of the foundation of the convents or the biographies of the deceased Sisters. There were some who compiled, year after year, the *Annals* of the Order in general and of each convent in particular, *Annals* so little known, so rarely consulted, and which, nevertheless, cast so great and unexpected light upon the history of a city and of the distinguished families of a province. All, in fine, but especially the Superioress, wrote numerous letters, a great many of which have been preserved. These, together with the writings just enumerated, the histories of the foundations, biographies of deceased Sisters, Annals of the convents, memoranda relative to founders and benefactors, circulars to the Order, form those valuable manuscripts to be found in every convent of the Visitation. They are written in the bold and beautiful handwriting of the seventeenth century, and bound in fine white parchment. In spite of their prolixity, incorrectness, and careless diction (pardonable in a language with no fixed rules as yet), they display that original style which heralded the Great Age, and the sublime and fertile imagination which reveals the great soul.

What more shall we add? Even poetry was cultivated throughout the Order: sacred poetry, of course, hymns and canticles. Mother de Châtel excelled in this style of composition. She who, in early youth, loved poetry "more than any young girl of her day," had hardly entered the cloister before her genius displayed itself with brighter lustre than ever. She had, however, a rival in Mother Anne-Marie Rosset, the most contemplative, as we know, of all St. Chantal's daughters, and whose sweet piety often poured itself out in canticles that delighted her companions. Mother de la Roche, raised to sublime union with God, also experienced at certain moments the necessity of giving vent to the raptures of her soul in poetry as ardent as her love. Even Mother de Bréchard and Mother Favre paid their tribute of song, and on feast-days recreated their Sisters with some canticle or Christmas carol.

The second generation of St. Chantal's daughters yielded not in this respect to the first. Many of them also cultivated poetry. Among others we may mention Mother de Chaugy, whose versatile talent could meet every demand; Mother de Rabutin, who gave a gay and graceful turn to everything she touched; and, above all, Sister Emmanuel-Philiberte de Monthouz, who seems to have established for herself in this respect a wonderful reputation.

St. Chantal, far from disapproving this innocent custom, heartily applauded it. The reader will remember that whilst still in the world she always carried about with her a copy of the Psalms of David versified by Philippe Desportes, and that when travelling she used to hang it at her saddle-bow, that she might sing on the way. This taste forsook her not in the cloister. Her voice was strong and beautiful, and she loved to sing. When some sublime thought occupied her, she used to call upon one of the Sisters to put it into verse. She cared very little for the rhyme, as Mother de Chaugy remarks, provided the idea was beautiful and expressed in a vivid and striking manner. Mother de Chaugy adds that our saint even ventured sometimes, though rarely, to pay her own tribute in verse to the community recreations on feast-days.

Under such circumstances, when to sanctity so great was joined so much distinction, when such intellectual culture was united to such elevation of heart, such beauty of soul, is it surprising that many families sought to gain admission for their children, that they, in a manner, forced the convent doors; that, in spite of St. Francis de Sales and St. Chantal, they made their way in; and that, even before the death of the latter, boarding-schools were everywhere established?

It was, in fact, no longer a few privileged children; real boarding-schools sprang up in all the convents. At Annecy, especially, as early as 1635, there were already twelve pupils, as we learn from a manuscript, one of whose charming pages we shall now quote.

It was in 1635, during the conclave that ended in the election of Alexander VII., the very Pope who resumed the process of St. Francis de Sales' canonization, interrupted for thirty years. The Sisters of Annecy had commenced a solemn novena to beg of Almighty God a Pope that would canonize their holy Founder. "We fasted on bread and water," says the manuscript, "we observed a rigorous silence, we wore the hair-shirt in the morning and took the discipline in the evening, we performed penances in the refectory, we received Holy Communion every day, and we were allowed to hear Mass all the morning; in a word, we passed the whole day in prayer, and during the evening recreation we went into the church to whisper our supplications into the ear of our holy Founder." Extraordinary favors rewarded this fervor, and seemed to predict the happy result of the conclave. "One night," continues the Sister that transmits to us these particulars, "I was in bed, for it was nearly eleven o'clock, and intently occupied with the thought of the graces our Sisters were receiving, and knowing myself most unworthy of such favors, I complained to my blessed Father of my privation. Then it came to my mind like a distraction that, perhaps, their imagination had a good deal to do with it, for it is my weak point not easily to credit extraordinary things. Knowing my imperfection, I at once rejected the thought. At the same moment a bright light shot forth from a small picture that I have always kept at the foot of our bed. It was painted during the lifetime of our holy Founder, and was given me by the Marquis de Sales, who had received it from his father Count Louis de Sales. The room, which is very large, appeared as if on fire, and *the twelve little boarders that were sleeping in it* were awakened by the brilliant light and sweet perfume, which lasted so long that all of us, the children and I, and even our holy Founder's little niece, only four years old, arose. The little child jumped out of bed, and seeing us all kneeling before the picture, which I was holding in my hand, and observing tears in my eyes, she began to caress me, saying: 'Ah! I know, dear mistress! It is my holy uncle who has come from Paradise to tell us that he will soon be a saint. Don't cry then. We'll tell the good mamma about it.' And the dear child took the picture and kissed it lovingly. The light was so strong that she ran to the other end of the room to pick up the Rosary I had lost. On handing it to me, she said: 'It is my holy uncle who brought it back.' Fearing she might catch cold, I took her in my arms. She was still hugging the picture. Then the light began to disappear gradually like a flame slowly burning out."[1]

This is our earliest glimpse of a Visitation boarding-school. What a charming scene! We can fancy ourselves present at it. A dormitory of twelve little boarders, a Sister sleeping near them, never leaving them—they call her "Dearest Mistress," "Dear Sister," just as at the present day. Her weak point is not to give ready credence to extraordinary things, though she believes at the right moment. To a strong mind she joins a mother's heart. Though moved even to tears at the prodigy, she does not forget her children. She is afraid of their catching cold, and after a moment's prayer she takes them in her arms and lays them gently in their bed.

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[1] *Recueil des Miracles de Notre Saint Fondateur.* Little manuscript folio of forty-one pages, unpublished, belonging to the Visitation of Dijon.

Other manuscripts confirm these particulars. "Most of our houses have boarding scholars," wrote Mother de Chaugy in 1664. "The second house of Annecy has generally twelve or fifteen. They occupy, however, a separate part of the building. It is the same in Rumilly and Chambéry. When he founded the house in Turin, our worthy prelate so firmly established this custom that our Sisters there have generally from twenty to twenty-five scholars."[1] The number of pupils everywhere increased with the growth of the Order, and, before the close of the seventeenth century, the boarding-schools of the Visitation were numerous and flourishing. Prayer-books were compiled[2] for the young lady boarders of the Visitation, and tragedies composed for them.[3] The pupils of the Visitation were soon met in the various walks of life, even in the highest ranks of society. In the eighteenth century their numbers increased. In vain did impiety ridicule convents; in vain did Voltaire, Rousseau, Diderot, d'Alembert, hoot at the education admired by Fénelon, by Madame de Maintenon, by Madame de Sévigné. In spite of these men, possessed not of the sense of either the past or the future, pupils crowded to the convents of the Visitation. They left them only in 1792, when the deputies of the Convention drove them out along with their teachers; but they returned with them after the Reign of Terror in greater numbers than before.

Apart from home-training, the best of all when possible, there is not for a young girl a simpler, a more solid, a lovelier form of education than that given in convent schools. There, by a happy concurrence of circumstances, the child finds all that is necessary for the development of her faculties, all that elevates the mind and touches the heart, all that forms the judgment and preserves innocence, all that matures the soul whilst guarding its truth and life of grace. What a priest is to the youth who has preserved his innocence, the nun is to the young girl. Her character and habit command respect; her devotedness inspires love. The sight of a life mortified, humble, and obedient prepares the youthful mind to comprehend these great virtues without which there is no true life either Christian or monastic. And how well calculated for the home of education at once solid and pious are those silent cloisters with their gardens, spacious and restful, their blessed pictures, their sacred chants heard, so to say, at every hour! Turn her eyes where she will, the young girl beholds naught but peace, modesty, and recollection in God. Such a spectacle at such an age is not without its effect. By degrees the peace of her surroundings takes possession of the child, their sweet remembrance will never leave her soul. A taste for holy joys, for pleasures pure and peaceful, is born within her, preparing her in an admirable manner for the hidden life of the wife and the mother. And it is those grates, against which the world exclaims, that bestow upon education the most valued assistance. They guard the child from those vile pictures that sully the imagination; from those bad books that corrupt the heart; from those scandals, that impiety, those blasphemies that shock the young mind. By them is preserved her innocence, the mother of delicacy, tenderness, and magnanimity.

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[1] *Lettres de la Mère de Chaugy,* 14 and 15.

[2] *Exercises spirituels selon l'Esprit de Saint François de Sales pour les Pensionnaires de son Ordre de la Visitation Sainte-Marie.* Dijon, Desaint, third edition, 1756. The second edition was published in 1693. The first edition is attributed to the first Mothers of the Visitation.

[3] We shall name only one: *La Tragédie du Départ de Sainte Chantal,* printed anonymously at Avignon.

And with innocence is preserved gaiety, its sister. In a word, we may apply to all these establishments and to the children reared in them what Bossuet has written of the Princess of Clèves and the convent in which she passed her lovely girlhood. "In the solitude of Sainte-Fare, as far removed from the ways of the world as her happy situation separated her from contact with it; on that holy mountain upon which the spouses of Jesus Christ revive the beauty of ancient times, upon which earthly pleasures are unknown, which is never desecrated by the footsteps of the worldling and the curious; there, under the guidance of the holy Abbess, who knew how to give milk to the weak as well as bread to the strong, did the Princess Anne spend the first happy years of her life."[1]

The world ignores neither this happiness nor this innocence. The more sad and wicked become the times, the more disorders increase, the more impiety and wickedness vaunt their reign, the more do the little ones crowd into convent schools, the more do even irreligious families cast their eyes upon those closed houses as upon an impenetrable sanctuary, a holy ark, in which, in the midst of the universal deluge of evil, they may hide their daughters far from the troubles, the passions, the scandals that make the shame, the terror of our day. This is the tide that is bearing along with it so many young girls into convent schools, and which, together with counter-currents always on the flow, explains the increasing popularity of religious boarding-schools.[2]

These are, however, only the general outlines of education in convents. Every order devoted to teaching has its peculiar characteristic; that of the Visitation is simplicity and mildness. "They shall be tenderly instructed and formed in spirituality, according to their little capacity, by a very gentle and prudent Sister."[1] These are the only words that St. Chantal wrote on the subject of education; but in them all is certainly contained: sweetness, gentleness, prudence. To have a complete idea of the spirit of the Visitandine boarding-schools, we must add the first and the last rules made in the saint's lifetime for the little girls that were to remain "as pupils and waiting" in the houses of the Order:

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[1] *Oraison funèbre de la Princesse Anne de Gonzague de Clèves*, part i.

[2] The popularity of the Visitandine boarding-schools is so great and pupils frequent them in such numbers, in spite of the precautions taken to prevent it, that in some convents the fear arose that they were contravening the intentions of St. Francis de Sales. The Sisters thought it their duty to consult His Holiness, Pius IX., upon the subject. "It is true," write the Sisters of Pignerol, "that in our day the duties of the boarding-school are infinitely more laborious and difficult to fulfil on account of the peculiar circumstances and nice requirements of the times; but we have been greatly encouraged by what the very honored and beloved Mother Françoise de Sales has written us on the subject. She tells us that, during a visit of the Cardinal Legate, His Eminence told her that our Holy Father the Pope approves our keeping boarding-schools; that, if our holy Founder were now living he would establish them, since the good of the Church calls for them; and that he loved the Church too well not to do all in his power to forward her interests." *Circulaire* of April 14, 1857.

"They shall, in the first place, love Our Lord with their whole heart, doing everything for love of Him.

"Lastly, they shall observe their little Rules very faithfully, cheerfully, and willingly."[2]

Here we see the spirit in all its fragrance: sweetness, gentleness, prudence, all for love, all with cheerfulness. It is the genuine spirit of St. Francis de Sales. In these schools are formed young girls who will neither astonish the world by the austerity of their life nor disgust it by their gloomy and repulsive piety; who will attract and enchant it by their gentleness; and who, uniting amiability with fervor, will carry into society, with the solidity and ardor of St. Chantal, something of the graciousness of St. Francis de Sales.

Before closing this chapter, we shall give an example of the spirit of which we speak. But whence shall we take it? The seventeenth century is too long past, and the nineteenth is still too near.

No, no! We shall leave you in the sacred shade in which God has placed you, young girls, whom we have seen issuing from the Visitandine cloisters to appear for one moment in society and to make its charm, to dazzle for an instant the world that you despised—you who quitted life gaily, smilingly, sporting, as it were, with death, regretting nothing of earth, because you loved nothing belonging to it. And you, also, who grace with innocence the *Annals* of the rising Visitation, of whom we could transcribe most lovely scenes of life and death from the old manuscripts of the Order—do you, also, remain in your hallowed obscurity, for you would carry our pen too far. Mother de Chantal claims it. It is her history that we write.

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[1] *Coutumier*, art. v. p. 27.

[2] *Ibid.* p. 336.

Besides, if we must, indeed, give an example of that solid, beautiful, and noble education, inaugurated under the eyes and, as it were, by the breath of our saint, may we not find it in her own children? Did not she educate them herself? Were they not the first whom she imbued with that grand spirit which she later on intrusted to the early boarding-schools of the Visitation? Is it not to her that we owe, not only her little Charlotte, that angelic soul who, as St. Francis de Sales said, passed away ere they had time to know and admire her, but also that other still more angelic child, Marie-Aimée, who, by the beauty of her girlhood, the modest grace of her youth, the tender and faithful affection she bore the memory of the Baron de Thorens, the heroism of her death, will ever remain the incomparable model of young girls destined to remain in the world? Was it not also Mother de Chantal who trained Françoise and Celse-Bénigne, changing the former from a light, vain, and worldly-minded girl into one of the most solid, distinguished, and virtuous women of the seventeenth century; watching over, admonishing, and directing the latter, wayward, venturesome, impatient of restraint as he was, until she saw him suitably married and become, at last, through her prayers and the advice of his young and pious wife, not only a brave and noble gentleman, but a fervent Christian also? Let us, then, turn away from these examples and sketches, interesting as they are, for they would entice us far out of our way. Let us confine our attention to our subject, and glance at the education of St. Chantal's children and grandchildren.

CHAPTER XII.

MOTHER DE CHANTAL'S ASSIDUOUS CARE OF HER CHILDREN AND GRANDCHILDREN.

In the immense collection of letters written by St. Chantal during the years we have been sketching, in the midst of interminable details of the foundations and other works that occupied and absorbed her great life, we suddenly come upon this little note, dated January, 1631. It is addressed to the Countess de Dalet, who had but lately entered the Visitation, and who, appointed Superioress of Montferrand the day after her profession, had shortly after heard of the death of her mother, to whom she had confided the care of her children.

"My poor dear Sister," writes St. Chantal, "I have just been apprised of your good mother's death. You cannot doubt my grief at this news, and I do not doubt yours nor your submission to God's holy will. O Thérèse, O my child, my darling, truly Our Lord is treating you somewhat as He treated me! Almost as soon as I had the honor of making my vows, God deprived me of my good father, to whose care I had left my son and daughters. Since, therefore, Our Lord favored me by giving me our venerable Founder for the father of my soul, my comforter and director in my affliction, I think you ought to apply to yourself the advice he gave me, and do for your children what he directed me to do for mine, that is, I think you ought to watch sweetly and like a good mother over their affairs. God will furnish you with light, leisure, and grace for your duties to them, as well as to your spiritual daughters."[1]

It was not only the advice of St. Francis de Sales that our saint gave the Countess de Dalet, but it was also her own rule of action. Who ever bore more nobly the burden of her twofold maternity? Who better than she found light, leisure, and grace to govern tenderly and prudently the two families God had given her? Weighed down by the cares of the one, she never forgot the other. She was always the best, the most tender, the most vigilant, the most indefatigable of mothers. Under the chill of age, she preserved for her children and grandchildren in the world a heart that never grew old.

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[1] *Lettres de Sainte Chantal.* Edition Migne, p. 1628.

Let us, then, pause for a last glance at this grand and beautiful picture. Let us rejoice to see with what love Mother de Chantal watched till death over the happiness and salvation of her children.

Alas! their number soon decreased. The six children with whom God had blessed her holy marriage, whose birth had rejoiced the beautiful years of her youth, were, if we may use the expression, sown along her way through life. The two eldest died in the cradle, Charlotte at the age of ten, and Marie-Aimée at nineteen. Only two are left, Celse-Bénigne and Françoise. A little later, and there will be but one. Such is life!

Françoise, as we have seen, married the Count de Toulongeon in 1620. She loved him, and she was loved by him. He was, moreover, rich, a great lord, highly esteemed, a favorite in the noblest circles of society. Here were combined all kinds of happiness. Ah, yes! But God knows well how to mingle sorrow with the purest joys. Françoise had already had two children, both longed for, both prematurely born, and both dead almost as soon as born. She was about to become a mother for the third time, but her state was one of anxiety and apprehension easily conceived.

Mother de Chantal had shared her daughter's hopes and disappointment. At each new prospect of motherhood, she had testified her joy; at each new death, she had sent to Françoise with the assurance of her sympathy all the consolation that the heart of a mother and a saint can give. Disquieted this third time more than ever before, more than she allowed any one to perceive, she resolved on her journey from Paris to Annecy to visit Alonne[1] on the way, the castle of M. de Toulongeon. She wrote her daughter to that effect, and expressed her joy at the thought of once more embracing her. Then was seen in what veneration the saint was held by her children, then were displayed her own tenderness and the depth of her affection for them.

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[1] Alonne is in the district of Chapelle-sous-Uchon, two leagues from

Françoise was sick in bed, but when she heard that her holy mother had arrived, she arose, hastily dressed, and, though in the eighth month of her pregnancy, insisted upon going on her knees to meet her. Fearing that she might injure both herself and her child, her friends begged her to desist. But she looked upon her mother as a saint, and, convinced that she could obtain for her a safe delivery, she persisted in remaining on her knees. Mother de Chantal, deeply moved, raised her from her kneeling posture. The prayer she then offered to God was certainly heard; for although on subsequent occasions Françoise was as unfortunate in her accouchements as in the early part of her married life, this time she gave birth to a daughter, whom she named Gabrielle.[1] The event was looked upon as miraculous.

Mother de Chantal had been gone a month, and she was occupied with the foundation of a convent in Dijon, when the news reached her. She blessed God for it, and congratulated her daughter. But still greater was her joy eighteen months later, to learn that Françoise had happily given birth to a son. "May God be eternally blessed, my dearest daughter!" she immediately wrote to her. "Your cousin tells me that you have been safely delivered of a son. I bless and thank God for it. You may imagine my feelings on the occasion, but (God willing) we shall see each other and talk about it at leisure. May ten thousand benedictions descend upon both mother and child!" To this expression of maternal affection she adds the injunction of a saint: "Take care of yourself, my daughter, and daily try to make yourself more acceptable to God in gratitude for so many favors. Write to me. It is very long since I had news from you."[2]

Montcenis and three from Autun. In 1631 it was raised to an earldom under the name of Toulongeon.

[1] It was she who married Bussy-Rabutin.

[2] Migne, *Lettres nouvelles*, p. 1567. The date of this letter is inac-

Françoise, herself, was enraptured. Honors, wealth, distinction, youth were hers, and now God had given her, besides a lovely daughter, a son to perpetuate her husband's noble name. All her sorrows were forgotten. The future smiled upon her. The world, which she had always loved, seemed more charming than ever. Perilous moment, in which the seductions of earth are apt to take souls captive! Oh, with what care, with what zeal did the saintly mother now watch over Françoise! Trembling for her salvation, she prayed and begged prayers for her. All her letters of this period conclude with the same postscript. Writing to Mother de Châtel, for example, she says: "P. S.—Pray and get prayers for my child in the world. She is in need of them. She and her husband are here." To Mother de Mouxy: "P. S.—I entreat you to pray and get our Sisters to pray for my daughter. She stands in need of prayers." To Mother de Bréchard: "Oh, how greatly our Françoise needs our prayers! God is loading her with blessings. Do not, my dear child, forget her in your prayers." [1]

Whilst thus begging spiritual assistance in every quarter to preserve her child against the fascinations and seductions that threatened her youth, she wrote her letter after letter of instruction, of encouragement, recalling to her the solid Christian principles in which she had been nurtured from childhood. "I am willing to believe, my dear daughter," she wrote, "that you are grateful for all this prosperity, and that you understand that God does not send it to you to be employed in vanity. Tell me, my dearest child, but tell me frankly and truly, what you yourself think on this point. I cannot help fearing lest the abundance of riches and honors of life stifle and blind us with their smoke, if we are not very much on our guard, and do not often reflect on their inconstancy and the uncertainty of the hour of death, when all must be abandoned." [2]

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curate. It could not have been written in 1630, for the Countess de Toulongeon's brother Celse-Bénigne is mentioned in it, and he died in 1627. The proper date must be 1627, for the letter speaks of a siege in which both the Count de Toulongeon and Celse-Bénigne were engaged, and this siege must have been that of La Rochelle.

[1] Migne, *Lettres nouvelles*, pp. 1121, 1122.

[2] *Ibid.* p. 417.

With all this happiness, the heart of Françoise was not without anxiety. After having given birth to four children, two of whom were dead, she was again about to become a mother. As often happens, the thought that this birth might be followed by others troubled her. Besides, under such circumstances, she was debarred from worldly amusements, which she still clung to a little. The thought of the future led her to fear that, if her family became numerous, she might not be able to establish her children according to their station in life. Let us hear with what zeal, with what emphasis Mother de Chantal encouraged her daughter, reminded her of the seriousness of life, of the great dignity of motherhood, and conjured her to leave her soul and her future to God. "O God! my dearest child, you are too fond of the things of earth. What do you fear? That the number of your children deprive you of the means of educating and settling them in life according to their birth? Apprehend nothing of the kind, I beg you, for that would be wronging the wise providence of Him who gives them to you, and who is sufficiently good and rich to support them, to provide for them as will be expedient for His honor and their salvation. This is all that we should desire for our children, and not aggrandizement in this miserable and fleeting world.

"Courage, then, my very dear daughter! Receive with love and from the hand of God all the little creatures that He gives you. Take very great care of them. Cherish them tenderly, and rear them entirely in the fear of God, and not in vanity. You will find that by thus acting, by remitting to Divine Providence all your solicitude concerning them, He will provide for them all so paternally that you will have great reason to bless Him and trust Him unreservedly.

"Hearken to me, my dearest child! Stand up for the right, serve God, turn away from vanity, live in perfect union with him whom God has given you, attend carefully to the government of your household, be assiduous in this, and henceforth adopt the habits and style of living proper to the good mother of a family."[1]

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[1] Migne, *Lettres nouvelles*, p. 1254.

This wise and solid advice, "given," as St. Chantal wrote, "from a heart that most sincerely desires the true happiness of its own well-beloved and most cherished daughter," was all the more necessary for Françoise as God was lavishing blessings upon her, and the course of events was drawing her more and more into the vortex of high life. After a siege and several campaigns in which he had displayed rare qualities as a soldier and general, Count de Toulongeon was appointed Governor of Pignerol, and whilst awaiting the baton of a Marshal of France, soon to be his, his domain of Alonne was raised to an earldom.[1] At this news Mother de Chantal again took up her pen. She was, without doubt, happy to hear of all this honor and greatness; but, it must be acknowledged, she was more disquieted by it than gratified. She trembled lest Françoise should allow herself to be gained by the world, to the neglect of her religious duties. She had heard, too, that Françoise was becoming witty and sarcastic (Françoise was a Rabutin), and she dreaded more than ever that pride and pleasure would, at last, snatch from her her child.

"I learn, my dear daughter," she wrote, "that Our Lord is showering prosperity upon you. For my own consolation, I shall believe that you are grateful for it, and that you well understand that He does not send it you to make a parade of it or to employ it in vanity, but that by means of it you may advance in holy humility and in the love of Him who gives it. . . . Think, my daughter, how soon all this must be left behind, and keep your mind constantly fixed on the happiness of those that will have made more account of eternal felicity than of the perishable moments of this frail life. You know, my dear child, that from your very babyhood I have tried to engrave the love of God deeply in your heart, and that I have always exhorted you to obey His will. Tell me, my dearest child, how you stand in this respect."

Then, after a few words on the love, respect, and obedience she owed her husband, "who so greatly deserves all that," she adds: "Ah! for God's sake, my daughter, do not let this abundance of wealth and honor lead you into any pompous display. They tell me that you are beginning to indulge in raillery. My dearest child, listen to me. Distinguish yourself by Christian modesty and your sweet, affable, and gracious intercourse with every one around you. Raillery is not becoming in one of your age and position. Try to attract and gain hearts by the means I have mentioned, and, above all, let prudence and holy reserve shine forth in all your actions. Receive this advice as coming from your mother, who loves you and desires that you be perfect in your state of life."

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[1] *Description du Duché de Bourgogne*, by Courtépée, new edition, vol. iii. p. 158.

Behold the true mother! For this noble title, for this sublime dignity, the heart alone does not suffice; the soul also is requisite, the soul of a Christian. It is nothing for a mother to love her children, or rather she loves them not, if she knows not how to watch over them to the end, protect them against the perils of the world, defend them against themselves, prevent them from falling, assist them to rise and run on to God. All this Mother de Chantal admirably understood; all this she did till her last breath, her zeal and vigilance, her preoccupation of thought and interest in the things of eternity never for a moment interfering with the tenderness, the perfectly human tenderness, if we may so speak, of her maternal affection.

We can adduce a touching proof of this. Mother de Chantal performed few miracles in her lifetime; but the greatest, the most celebrated were wrought in favor of her children and grandchildren. We have seen Françoise, in 1622, going on her knees to meet her mother and thus obtaining, after two unfortunate accouchements, the safe delivery of Gabrielle. Later we find her frequently sending her son, whose delicate health caused her constant anxiety, to Mother de Chantal, "that," as she used to say, "she who gave me my daughter may preserve to me my son."[1] Several years later, in 1636, when this only son was at the point of death, when all around were waiting for his last breath, what did his distressed mother do? She took her carriage and drove to Autun where Mother de Chantal then was.

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[1] *Mémoires* of Mother de Chaugy, p. 179.

Touched to the soul at her daughter's grief, although her letters of obedience made no mention of stopping at any place but convents, she yielded to the call of affection, and set out at once for Alonne. There Almighty God deigned to glorify maternal love in the person of this incomparable woman; for no sooner had she made the sign of the cross on her grandson's forehead than he was instantaneously cured.

Whilst Mother de Chantal was thus exerting all her zeal and affection to make Françoise a true Christian, she did not forget Celse-Bénigne. As we have already remarked, she had been fortunate in her choice of a wife for him. Besides her noble origin and distinguished appearance, Marie de Coulanges was a girl of rare piety, remarkably gentle disposition, well suited for her mission of restraining Celse-Bénigne whilst promoting his happiness. Relieved of anxiety on this point, Mother de Chantal blessed God for having given her son such a partner, and she loved Marie de Coulanges with the tenderest and most exalted affection, as the wife of her dear son Celse-Bénigne and the guardian angel of his precious soul.[1] She was constantly testifying her affection for her. "I am exceedingly anxious," she wrote to Madame de Coulanges, Marie's mother, "to hear from our sweet and beloved child. Believe that I bear her always in the centre of my heart. God grant her a safe accouchement!"[2] When she learned that her little granddaughter had died at her birth, how graciously she assured the young mother that she loved her none the less on that account. "Ah, well! we must bless God for having sent this little one to Paradise where she will eternally praise His goodness, and pray for her dear father and mother. He will give them other children, if it shall please Him. But do not think that my daughter is a whit less dear to me on that account. Why should she be? Is not the poor little thing herself more distressed than any one else? It is comfort enough to know that she is well, and to hope (God willing) she will soon again be a mother."[3]

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[1] Letter to Monseigneur Frémyot, May, 1625.

[2] *Lettres anciennes,* letter cii. *bis.*

[3] Letter ciii.

And when God sent the second child, the future Madame de Sévigné, in what terms of genuine affection she again wrote to Madame de Coulanges! "I am continually begging our good Lord to preserve your dearest child and grant her a safe accouchement. My God! madame, how dear this little wife is to me! Indeed, I love and cherish her greatly. Love me, my dearest lady, in the person of my son."[1]

We should have to peruse all her letters to Monsieur and Madame de Coulanges, to know our saint's heart. She lavished upon both expressions of the liveliest affection, and when alluding to their kindness to her son she exhausts the terms of gratitude to thank them.

Celse-Bénigne, however, in spite of his faithful love for his young wife, in spite of the respect and gratitude he felt for her parents, in spite of his own noble and generous heart, was for his mother and family a source of constant anxiety. His jesting and caustic wit; his frankness verging sometimes on rudeness and even insult; his rashness, his dangerous friendships, were ever involving him in duels, from which he came off always victorious, thanks to his skill in arms, always covered with glory, thanks to his contempt of danger, though in them he risked his soul, and under the government of a man like Richelieu sometimes his head also.

One of these duels gave rise to much comment. Celse-Bénigne had just received Holy Communion in his parish church on Easter Sunday along with his young wife and the De Coulanges family, when a footman entered the church and told him that his friend, Boutteville de Montmorency, was waiting for him at the gate Saint-Antoine, having need of him as a second against Pont-Gibaud, of the house of Lude. Celse-Bénigne instantly left the church and, velvet-slippered as he was, hastened to the rendezvous, and fought with his usual courage and success. We may imagine the talk and the scandal. Preachers denounced it from the pulpit, the King was wrathy, and Celse-Bénigne was obliged to quit Paris. He fled into Burgundy, where he was concealed at Alonne by his brother-in-law, the Count de Toulongeon.

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[1] Letter civ. *bis*.

Some time after he returned to Paris, and by degrees resumed his position at court, "where the King, not very jealous of his authority," says Bussy, "no longer regarded him with displeasure."[1]

But if the King thought little of his own power, not so Richelieu. Seeing the laws set at naught, the best and noblest blood of France flowing uselessly in single combat, the Prime Minister resolved to take a decisive step, hoping to spare torrents by shedding a few drops. He ordered Boutteville de Montmorency to be arrested and beheaded. The Baron de Chantal's friends trembled for him also. "Cardinal de Richelieu," says Bussy, "who had just cut off the head of Chalais, and who hated Chantal on account of his being the friend of Chalais, De Boutteville, and Toiras, had represented to His Majesty the great intimacy that had existed between the two first-named. As that did not lessen the King's partiality for Chantal, the minister, who knew his royal master to be extremely suspicious, told him that Chantal laughed at every one. To make the King hate him, it was enough to make him fear him."[2]

What was St. Chantal's anguish under these critical circumstances! But her courage arose above her grief. "When the news was brought to her," writes Mother de Marigny, "that M. de Boutteville and M. de la Chapelle had been executed, I believe by the King's order, for having fought a duel, this blessed Mother formed the project of going herself to France, if she could obtain permission, with the design of being present at the execution of her son, who was so often engaged in duels, and of assisting him to die well, in spite of the ignominy that might attach to her as a religious and as the mother of the criminal."[3]

Whilst things were in this state, news came that the English, in order to help the Protestants of La Rochelle, were meditating a descent upon the French coast, and that an army under the command of Marquis de Toiras was about to set out to oppose their landing. Celse-Bénigne, "who, for some time, felt the disfavor of the King," saw in this a good opportunity to escape, by some brilliant deed, from his unpleasant position. He enlisted, therefore, as a volunteer along with Noailles, Sombran, and some other noblemen almost as much compromised as himself.

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[1] Bussy, *Généalogie manuscrite.*

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] Second manuscript of Mother Louise-Dorothée de Marigny. Process of Beatification, vol. ii. p. 978. See, also, manuscript of Mother de la Croix, *id.* p. 516.

As soon as St. Chantal was apprised of his step, she hastened to write to her son. The advice she gave him was grave as the circumstances. Infinitely more concerned about the danger to his soul than to his person from the chances of war, she endeavored to awaken in him the thought of eternity. She entreated him to keep extraordinary watch over his conscience and to put it in the state in which he would wish it to be at the hour of death. She dwelt upon the danger to which he would be exposed, upon the vanity of this world, which is but smoke and illusion, and ended by assuring him that she would willingly give her own life to obtain for him the grace of living in the observance of the divine commandments, and of at last possessing the incomprehensible joys of Paradise.[1]

She wrote, also, to the young Baroness to support and encourage her in the agonizing state of mind to which, as we may easily believe, the approaching war had reduced her. "Ah, my dearest child," were her words, "I know well what your poor heart suffers at the thought that he (Celse-Bénigne) is exposed to the dangers of war. Indeed, when I think of it, it distresses me too. Believe that I now pray for him more earnestly than ever. I feel confident that God will protect him and, whatever may happen, receive him into His paternal arms."[2] She not only prayed for him herself, but she everywhere solicited the prayers of others for him. She wrote to Mother Favre, to Mother de Bréchard, to Archbishop Frémyot, and to M. and Madame de Coulanges. She complained of not receiving news, and she multiplied her letters in the hope of obtaining daily accounts of her dear child.

Meanwhile the war had commenced, and in the midst of the daily increasing danger Celse-Bénigne, sustained by the words of his mother and of his young wife, and protected by so many prayers, felt his faith revive. With no diminution of courage or gaiety, truly French, he began to entertain the serious thoughts with which every Christian soul should face death. On July 22, 1627, the English appeared off the coast of Rhé, and everything foretold an engagement that evening. This prospect before him, Celse-Bénigne confessed and received Holy Communion with extraordinary piety and, at peace with God, thought of nothing but the valiant fulfilment of duty.

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[1] *Lettres de Sainte Chantal*, letter lxxx.

[2] *Lettres nouvelles.* Edition Migne, p. 1367.

The action was bloody and lasted six hours. Celse-Bénigne performed prodigies. He had three horses killed under him. He received twenty-seven thrusts of the pike, the last one fatal, and, it is said, from Cromwell himself. "Joining his hands, he begged God's mercy, and died gloriously,"[1] "in defence of the Church and the King."[2] He was scarcely thirty years old. "Had he lived longer and continued in the army, as he would certainly have done, during the wars that lasted throughout the whole reign of Louis XIII., with the position, talent, and courage that he possessed, he would probably have attained the highest honors of his profession," says Bussy. "I say *probably*, because nothing is certain. Fortune prevents the wise from being sure of anything."[3]

Celse-Bénigne was universally regretted.[4] His uncle, the Archbishop of Bourges, was inconsolable. He had not the courage to inform Mother de Chantal, but begged the Bishop of Geneva to present to her the bitter chalice. His Lordship made choice of the moment after she had received Holy Communion, and sent word for her to meet him in the parlor after Mass. He took the precaution to direct the portress to request Mother de Châtel to be in readiness at the parlor door to assist our saint, in case she should be taken sick.[1] They remembered what had happened at Marie-Aimée's death. "Ah, Mother," said the Bishop, "we have news from the war. A severe action has taken place on the Isle of Rhé. Before the engagement, the Baron de Chantal heard Mass, confessed, and communicated."—"And, my Lord," tremblingly responded the saint, "he is dead."

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[1] *Mémoires* of Mother de Chaugy, p. 221.

[2] Bussy, *Généalogie manuscrite.*

[3] *Ibid.* Bussy adds in a note: "The extraordinary and premature death of Christophe and Celse-Bénigne de Rabutin clearly shows that worldly prosperity is not the recompense of the good, since the holy life of Jeanne Frémyot could not avert these misfortunes. On the contrary, it seems that God sent her these afflictions, in order to draw her more closely to Himself."

[4] *Vie abrégée.*

The good prelate burst into tears, unable to utter a word. Mother de Chantal was speechless with grief. She was kneeling, her hands clasped, tears streaming from her eyes. "Words are inadequate to express such grief," writes Bussy-Rabutin. "Mother de Chantal testified hers by extreme dejection, which roused fears for her life."[2] After a long silence, she at last exclaimed: "My Lord and my God, suffer me to give vent to my grief in words! And what shall I say, my God, except to give Thee thanks for the honor Thou hast conferred upon this my only son, by calling him away whilst fighting for the Roman Church?" Then she took up a crucifix and, kissing the arms, she said: "My Redeemer, receive this dear child into the arms of Thy mercy." Still weeping profusely, she continued: "My dear child, how happy you are to have sealed with your blood the fidelity your ancestors ever evinced to the Roman Church! In this I esteem myself happy in being your mother."

Then she arose, and still weeping calmly, she said to the Bishop of Geneva: "I assure you, my Lord, that for more than eighteen months I have been interiorly urged to beg God to grant me the favor of letting my son die in His service, and not in those unfortunate duels in which his friends sometimes engaged him." As she was speaking, her brother, the Archbishop of Bourges, entered the parlor, weeping so bitterly that it was pitiful to see. With sighs and tears he recounted the excellent qualities of his nephew, his merits and fine disposition, thus increasing whilst relieving his grief by those numberless little recollections so dear to the survivors of the beloved dead. After mingling their tears for a few moments, the saint withdrew. The parlor had, meanwhile, been filled successively by members of both the secular and regular clergy, but not one had had the courage to address a single word to the afflicted mother. Grief and admiration rendered them mute.

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[1] *Vie abrégée.*

[2] *Ibid.*

For several days our saint continued dejected and silent, "which state," as the old chronicle says, "gave fears for her life." In recreation, she sat with closed eyes, silently spinning, entirely absorbed. There was, however, one ray of joy in her overwhelming sorrow. For almost ten years she had had so much anxiety about the salvation of her dear boy, she had so often trembled with dread of seeing him killed in a duel, that her Christian heart now breathed freely again, knowing him safe from the danger of losing his soul. "Ah!" she wrote, "my slightest dread of seeing him die an enemy to God, in one of those duels in which his friends engaged him, afflicted me more than his death itself, which was good and Christian. My consolation at my son's having shed his blood for the Faith surpasses my grief."

The day after she learned the sad news, notwithstanding her own deep sorrow, she thought of the young widow and wrote to her, not, indeed, to console her—it was too soon for that—and besides, can the heart ever be consoled for separation so cruel? Mother de Chantal wrote to raise her daughter-in-law's soul to thoughts that would in some degree inspire her with fortitude. Marie de Coulanges was a Christian, and, like Mother de Chantal herself, she had often trembled lest Celse-Bénigne should perish in one of those duels in which the loss of his mortal life would have been the least misfortune. The thought that he had died nobly and valiantly, sword in hand, in the service of God and his country, was the only consideration that could temper her sorrow, the only comfort that our saint attempted to offer her. "Ah! my best and dearest child, should we not love, bless, and generously accept the most holy and sweet will of God in whatever He may ordain? Oh, yes, my darling, we must do so willingly and lovingly, and, though the wound be severe and the pain very great, it must be cherished for the sake of the hand that has inflicted it. Now, this is the virtue that I want your dear soul to practise in its affliction. Your good husband, like all other men, was mortal. O God! my child, remember the risk he so often ran of losing eternal life. Ah! see how merciful our good God has been in giving him a death so glorious, so Christian, that we are all justified in believing that he has now commenced a life of never-ending glory and happiness. Take this solid consolation, my very dear daughter, and hope for a reunion with your good husband, in which our enjoyment of his company will be exempt from every fear, and full of endless joy. This has always been the real happiness that I have wished you from your blessed marriage, and I can desire for you none other. Take care of yourself, my dearest child, that you may rear in the fear of the Lord the dear pledge[1] He has given you of your holy marriage. . . . I assure you I never felt nearer to you than I now do; for, beside the interest of my undying love for my very dear son, I wish to love you with all the affection that God has given me for both you and him. I pray this Sovereign Goodness to be Himself your consolation, and I remain with unequalled affection,

"YOUR MOST HUMBLE MOTHER."[2]

Not satisfied with having addressed this admirable letter to the young widow, Mother de Chantal, who was about to visit Orléans, notified her of the fact, and requested her to meet her there. Marie de Coulanges hastened at once to cast herself into the arms of her holy mother-in-law, who made her stop in the convent with her, loaded her with testimonies of the warmest affection, and omitted nothing to console her.

Alas! Marie de Coulanges was to survive Celse-Bénigne very little longer than Marie-Aimée had survived the Baron de Thorens. In 1632 Mother de Chantal received the unexpected intelligence that her young daughter-in-law was seriously ill, her life in danger. "My very good and honored Lord," she immediately wrote to her brother, the Archbishop of Bourges, who had communicated the news to her, "your letter has affected me deeply in the account you give of the sickness of my poor dear daughter. Ah, will God take her also? If such be His holy will, I adore it with all my heart, for in all things and everywhere we ought to accept it lovingly. . . . I have now an opportunity to make many acts of resignation, whilst awaiting His will regarding His dear creature, whose death will so deeply afflict her blessed family; but what I feel most of all, my dearest Lord, is the irreparable loss it will be to her little daughter.[1] But we must submit to the strokes it pleases our good God to give us, and tenderly kiss the rod, for He strikes us only in love. You may imagine, my dearest Lord, how assiduously we are praying for this dear daughter and for all the afflicted. I confess that I shall be exceedingly anxious to receive news of her."[2]

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[1] Marie de Chantal, later the Marchioness de Sévigné.

[2] *Lettres de Sainte Chantal*, letter xci.

The news was not long in coming. Mother de Chantal was again crushed by the death of the young Baroness. She uttered but these words: "God gave her to us. God has taken her from us. Blessed be His holy name!" and then fell for several days into that state of silent dejection habitual to her under such circumstances, "for she had a heart keenly sensitive to the loss of those that she loved."[3]

"I entered her room half an hour after she had received the news of Madame de Chantal's death," writes Mother de Marigny, "and she said to me: 'I did not think that nature had still such power over me; for, had I been standing when I saw the Archbishop of Bourges' letter, I think I should have fallen, I was so shocked. Poor child! she is happy. But I feel her death most keenly, and more than I have felt anything for a long time. It seems to me that the death of my son did not distress me so much. My God! who would have thought that she would die so soon! I never saw a woman who gave promise of a longer life. See how appearances deceive!' We then spoke to her about Mademoiselle de Chantal, and she replied: 'The Blessed Virgin will be her mother!' and tears flowed gently from her eyes."[4]

"Alas!" she wrote a few days after to her nephew, Bishop de Neufchèze, "shall I not tell you how sensibly my heart of flesh feels the death of my poor dear daughter De Chantal, whom I tenderly loved, as, indeed, her virtue and sweet disposition forced me to do. See how our good God takes from us, little by little, all that is dearest to us here below."[1]

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[1] Marie de Chantal.

[2] *Lettres de Sainte Chantal*, letter xv.

[3] *Mémoires* of Mother de Chaugy, p. 213.

[4] *Mémoires* of Mother Dorothée de Marigny. *Procès de Béatification*, vol. ii. p. 951.

She was writing in similar terms to her daughter Françoise, and entreating her to moderate her grief (for these two amiable and Christian young women had been closely united in the bonds of friendship), when she received another piece of sad news. The Count de Toulongeon died about two weeks after the young Baroness de Chantal, and Françoise was now a widow with two little children.

As for Françoise herself, overwhelmed by a blow so unexpected and so severe, she had but one thought, to go to her mother, sure of finding in her a heart that could understand her, console and strengthen her. She hastened to Annecy, and it was there, in that convent in which she had spent her happy girlhood and to which she now returned, her heart wounded and bleeding, that she heard again from her mother's lips, mingled with embraces and tenderness that increased with her sorrow, those sublime words of faith, those solid consolations of religion, that alone can bring peace to the afflicted soul. It was there that she took those generous resolutions of leading a devout life apart from the world and wholly devoted to the education of her little children, and which she so faithfully kept. When, after a stay of several months at Annecy, she tearfully tore herself from the arms of her good mother, to return to Alonne, she begged her for a written rule of life, which, having obtained, she preserved with veneration and followed constantly and generously. To it, doubtless, she was indebted for becoming, despite her youth and great fortune, one of the most solid, most distinguished, and most devout women of the seventeenth century.

We might now end the story of St. Chantal's relations with her children, were it not that there is still a little girl who claims our attention, an orphan, the child of Celse-Bénigne and Marie de Coulanges, to be known later as

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[1] Letter of July, 1632.

Madame de Sévigné. Where was she? Who was taking care of her? What became of her after the death of her parents? What was Mother de Chantal able to do for her, and what did she do? A word upon these interesting queries before closing this chapter.

The reader will remember that Celse-Bénigne and Marie de Coulanges, his wife, generally resided with M. and Madame de Coulanges. After her husband's death, the young Baroness went to live permanently with them; and it was with them she died, leaving to her mother the care of her child. Marie de Chantal remained, then, with her grandmother Madame de Coulanges. Certainly, nothing could be more natural; and since she could not stay with both of her grandmothers at the same time, the simpler plan was for her to remain with her grandmother De Coulanges, who was living in the world, rather than to be shut up in the cloister at five and a half years with her grandmother De Chantal. The latter assented to this very natural arrangement, and warmly thanked M. and Madame de Coulanges for taking charge of the dear little orphan and her estate. Though little disquieted as to her future, since she was in so good hands, Mother de Chantal, nevertheless, lost sight of her not for one instant, ready in case of need to receive and educate her in the convent of Annecy.

In proof of this we need only open St. Chantal's correspondence. Letters do not deceive. In them the heart reveals itself. Even before the death of the young Baroness, when little Marie was still in her cradle, Mother de Chantal never forgot the child. She ever has an affectionate word for "our little one," for that "poor little darling whom M. and Madame de Coulanges love so paternally and maternally,"[1] for that "dear pledge left by Celse-Bénigne."[2] But after the death of the young Baroness, when Marie de Chantal was without father or mother, the saint mentions her still more frequently and tenderly. Her letters teem with proofs of her love and solicitude. "I am writing to M. and Madame de Coulanges," she wrote to the Archbishop of Bourges, "to whom, I am sure, the loss of their daughter has been a severe blow. I think their heart will not change toward the poor little orphan. My God! when my thoughts turn in that direction, I dare not keep them fixed there long."[1] To Madame de Coulanges, who had written that she would take charge of Marie and rear her with her other children, our saint wrote: "As for our little orphan, I do not feel anxious about her as long as it shall please God to preserve my most honored brother (M. de Coulanges) and you, my dearest sister; for I know that now more than ever you will be a true father and mother to her, and that your children will always cherish her. It touches me to the heart when I think of her, deprived of father and mother."[2]

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[1] *Lettres de Sainte Chantal*, letter c.

[2] *Ibid.* xci.

Madame de Coulanges having been taken sick, Mother de Chantal was again disturbed about the future of her granddaughter. "I am troubled," she wrote to Madame de Toulongeon, "at what your uncle tells me of the indisposition of my dearest sister, Madame de Coulanges. May God deign to preserve her! I am under infinite obligations to her for the maternal love she bears the poor little orphan. She extends her goodness so far as to take care of and teach the little thing herself."[3]

Three years later, in 1634, M. and Madame de Coulanges, still inconsolable, and the little orphan being about to make her First Communion, the saint wrote them a letter full of affection and sentiments of faith. We give an extract from it: "My God! my dearest brother, how deeply your letter has affected me! Tears came to my eyes on reading of the great affliction of my poor dear sister. . . . But you, indeed, console me by the news you give of the dear little orphan. How happy she will be if God preserves you and my poor dear sister to continue your pious and prudent care of her! It is true that I love this child as I loved her father, and all for Heaven. I rejoice at the grace she will have of communicating at Easter. I shall bear it in mind and beg God that, at this first reception of our sweet Saviour, it may please Him to take possession of her soul so entirely that it may ever be His! How indebted I am to you in this little creature!"

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[1] *Lettres de Sainte Chantal,* letter lxxviii.

[2] *Ibid.* civ.

[3] *Lettres de Sainte Chantal.* Edit. Migne, p. 596. The date of the letter is wrong. It was written in 1634, and not in 1632. Marie de Chantal was born in 1626, and she made her First Communion in 1635, at the age of nine.

This is the last letter we find addressed to M. and Madame de Coulanges, who both died shortly after. In 1636 a family meeting was held to provide for the future of the young orphan. Two plans were considered: either to send her to her grandmother De Chantal, who would have educated her in the convent of Annecy, as she had done Françoise, or to confide her to her uncle Christophe de Coulanges, the Abbot of Livry, who wanted her. The latter was decided upon. On the one hand, Mother de Chantal was then sixty-four years old, and they feared she might not live much longer; on the other, the Abbey of Livry was at the very gate of Paris and presented for the education of the young orphan innumerable resources that could not be found among the mountains of Savoy. Events justified the prudent decision of the family council. Marie de Coulanges was scarcely fifteen when her saintly grandmother died. Confided to the care of the excellent Abbot de Coulanges, whom she has made us know and love under the name of the *bien bon*, reared in the beautiful Abbey of Livry, in the midst of solitude and books, formed by Ménage and Chapelain, she was able to cultivate in her youth those rare talents that might have been stifled among the mountains of Savoy, or, at least, could not have escaped being disfigured by the bad taste and many imperfections of a provincial dialect. Even Mother de Chantal herself could not get rid of them.

Such were, from first to last, St. Chantal's relations with her children and grandchildren. We see how she understood her duty as a mother, and what place the sacred affections of nature held in her heart. Like all great souls, she had a warm heart, which, according to St. Francis de Sales, *loved powerfully*. She has expressed in a style, uncultivated, if you will, but ingenuous and forcible, every shade of affection: tenderness, joy, anxiety, grief, devotedness. It is necessary only to open her letters to see with what warmth she loved.

God, who knew her better than we, to raise her to dazzling sanctity, willed to inflict upon her that martyrdom of love of which she herself had so well spoken. After afflicting her with excruciating maladies, after abandoning her great mind to every species of doubt and darkness, He sought a more sensitive part of her being whereon to inflict deeper wounds, and He pierced her heart in the strong and holy ties of family affection. Whilst still very young, she lost her first two children in their infancy, her husband died before her eyes, her little Charlotte in her arms. These were the first strokes. And when the saint, matured in solitude, had become capable of still greater suffering, God sent her new afflictions. She lost successively her father, her father-in-law, her son-in-law, her daughter, her grandson; and after a short interval of relief, her son, her daughter-in-law, and her one surviving son-in-law. Twelve tombs opened and closed before her in a few years. Her name became extinct, and of that brilliant family she had seen growing up around her there remained but one widow and three orphans. Terrible trials! They brought out in the clearest light not only St. Chantal's faith and her submission to the decrees of Heaven, but also the vivacity, the ardor of her maternal affection, and that beautiful assemblage of natural and supernatural qualities which made her so great a saint.

CHAPTER XIII.

ST. CHANTAL'S JOURNEY TO PARIS.—SHE VISITS ALMOST ALL THE CONVENTS OF THE VISITATION IN FRANCE.—GENERAL CONDITION OF THE ORDER.

1635—1636.

ONLY twenty-five years had passed since the foundation of the Order of the Visitation, and already sixty-five houses were established in France, Switzerland, Savoy, Piedmont, and Spanish Lorraine, whilst about ten new ones were on the eve of commencement. This rapid and daily increasing propagation excited admiration and awakened fear. As long as Mother de Chantal lived there was, of course, no danger. She was the bond of union in the Order, its centre, its life. She governed it by her title of Foundress and eldest Daughter of St. Francis de Sales, by her brilliant virtue, her activity, and the masculine energy of her character. But who could answer for the future? After her death what would become of those isolated houses, independent of one another, with neither Superiors-General, Visitors, nor annual meetings and Chapters? What had become of so many abbeys, constituted in similar form, so fervent in the beginning, and afterward fallen so low? And if in the seventeenth century the Church had the consolation of seeing them revive to a life more holy, to what was it due? Was it not to their having been drawn from their isolation, to their having been erected into Congregations under a Superior-General? Was it not thus was effected the reform of the Benedictines, the Feuillants, the Recollects, the Ursulines—that reform which made piety bloom again in so many monasteries?

Thoughts such as these seriously occupied the mind of good men at the period of which we are writing. St. Vincent de Paul never lost sight of them. Many Bishops, more especially connected with the Visitation, did not conceal their anxiety. As in 1635 there was to be a general meeting of the clergy in Paris, the occasion was thought favorable for a serious examination of the question by the Bishops. His Lordship, Jean-François de Sales, was consulted. He not only approved the proposed examination, but perceiving the absolute necessity of St. Chantal's presence in Paris at so important a moment, he determined to send her to France.

He wished, however, to consult her before acting. Sending for her to the parlor, he asked what her heart said to her about this journey. "It is a long time," she answered, "since I consulted it about anything; but were I to do so, it would tell me only that I ought to obey." It was then decided that she should go to Paris, but as she was just finishing her six years of superiority, it was determined to await her deposition. The election of a new Superioress would then provide for the government of the first convent of Annecy.

On the 19th of May, the Sisters being assembled in choir, in presence of the Bishop, Mother de Chantal humbly knelt down, her countenance beaming with joy, and resigned her authority. Then she acknowledged the faults she had committed during her superiority: "My Lord, I most humbly tell my fault of having frequently broken silence, even the great silence, without necessity; of having absented myself from the assemblies of the community without urgent necessity; and of not having served our Sisters as I should, for which I most humbly beg their pardon and yours, also, my Lord, for the displeasure I have given you."

The Bishop replied that, thanks to God, he had not perceived any disorder in the house; but that, in accordance with the praiseworthy custom of the Order, she should say for her penance three *Paters* and *Aves*. When His Lordship ceased speaking, our saint retired to the last place,[1] and five days later, on the 24th of May, Mother de Châtel was elected to succeed her.

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[1] *Mémoires inédites de la Mère de Mont-Saint-Jean.* She says that all this occurred at the time of the saint's last deposition. She meant the deposition before the last, for the last took place in a very different manner, as we shall see further on.

Scarcely was she deposed, when Mother de Chantal began preparations for her journey to Paris. But just then Mgr. Jean-François de Sales fell ill, and died a happy death. This loss, which she deeply felt, obliged her to remain in Annecy a few months longer. Mother Favre, recently deposed from superiority, was also there, and it was a pleasing sight to see the saintly Foundress and her first two daughters once more together. She would sometimes take Mother Favre by the hand and say: "Come, my great daughter (*ma grande fille*), let us go tell our faults. It is good for us who have been long Superioresses to perform some of the acts of humility belonging to inferiors."

Mother de Chantal's departure could not, however, be long delayed. She left Annecy toward the last of June, and after resting a while at Moulins, reached Paris on the 25th of July. The next day some of the Bishops most devoted to the Visitation, and with them St. Vincent de Paul, the Commandeur de Sillery, and the principal benefactors of the Order, met in the parlor of the first convent of Paris. The question for which they had assembled was discussed at length. All were of opinion that it was necessary to establish some bond of union among the convents, some tie by which to connect them one with another. The next point, one upon which they could not decide, was what should this bond be? Some wished Mother de Chantal to be nominated Superioress-General of the Order, the title to be transmitted to her successor. Others thought that, after our saint's death, another might not have the ability to govern an Order so widespread; consequently, they judged it desirable to appoint a Superior-General. Mother de Chantal, recollected and humble, said not a word. It was not till the question had been well discussed that she spoke. She began by reminding the assembly that the point under discussion was not new; that it had been long and seriously considered even during St. Francis de Sales' lifetime; that the last conversation she had with him, and which lasted nearly two hours, had been solely upon this point; that he had then told her that it was God's will for the Order to have no

Superior-General; and that she thought they should abide by his decision. Then opening the Constitutions, she showed the Bishops how prudently the holy Founder had provided for the preservation of the same spirit in his Order; that to establish union he had not had recourse to authority but to charity, which was far better, and that, if any inconvenience could arise from this plan, it would, perhaps, be less than might ensue under other circumstances. All this was said in that clear, distinct, precise, and forcible manner peculiar to our saint, and it effected a change of opinion in the assembly. "What more could be desired?" asked the Bishops. "It is the Founder that speaks. He gives a means of union, not indeed of authority, but of charity, which is milder and more solid. Let it so remain."

Thus terminated that assembly in which Mother de Chantal's great qualities shone with a brilliancy enhanced by her rare humility. She made use of the occasion also to lay before the Bishops some difficult points in the *Custom-Book* and the *Ceremonial*, ask their advice about them, and obtain their *imprimatur* for the publication of the *Little Office of the Blessed Virgin for the use of the Sisters of the Visitation.*[1]

Meanwhile the news of St. Chantal's arrival in Paris had rapidly spread throughout the Order. There were at that time in the numerous convents daily springing into existence many who had never seen the holy Foundress. Could they allow their Mother to die without having once, at least, gazed upon her venerated features? And on her side, was it possible for her not to wish to see her daughters in Christ? Could she leave this world without having visited her numerous convents, without having assured herself that the spirit of her blessed Father was well understood in them, the Rules and Customs of the Institute faithfully observed?

Impelled, then, by her own desires as much as by letters from all the houses, she resolved, before returning to Savoy, to make a general visitation of her Order.[1]

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[1] We have drawn these particulars from the Circular addressed by Mother de Chantal herself to the Order of the Visitation, for the purpose of rendering an account to the religious of what had passed in Paris at the meeting of the Bishops. The letter is found in the Archives of Annecy.

After writing to Annecy for permission, she went first, in the beginning of September, 1635, to the convent of Melun, which had been established on the 25th of March preceding. On leaving Melun she stopped successively at Montargis, Blois, Orléans, and Tours, where she experienced "the greatest satisfaction at seeing the spirit of humility, poverty, and exact observance reigning in them."[2] It was her intention to visit Nantes and Rennes also; but on the eve of the day fixed for her departure from Tours she fell ill. Her journey was thus interrupted. She returned to Paris toward the feast of All Saints, and remained there that winter.

Either because she was still under the influence of what had passed in the meeting of the Bishops, or that the sight of the wealth that abounded in the two convents of Paris made her fear that one day they might be tempted to arrogate to themselves some authority over the Order and act without consulting the poor and humble house of Annecy, Mother de Chantal had but one word on her lips all winter: "Union with Annecy." "Annecy is our source," she used to say, "the principle of our life. It was there that we were born, and it is there only that we shall find light and strength." She was constantly declaring that, if the sacrifice of her life were necessary to maintain this blessed union, she would make it on the instant. "Ah! Sisters," she was ever saying, "our beloved Visitation is a little kingdom of charity. If union and holy love do not reign in it, it will soon be divided and, consequently, destroyed."

The Sisters of the first convent of Paris determined to take advantage of these sentiments of Mother de Chantal to obtain from her an inestimable favor, that of possessing her heart after her death. Under pretext that an infallible means of securing union would be that, Annecy having her body, Paris should have her heart, the Sisters ventured to make their request. At the bare mention of such a thing the saint recoiled in affright. "O God! my daughter," she exclaimed, "what are you talking about? This miserable heart deserves, on account of its infidelity, to be cast into the common sewer rather than to be preserved." "O Mother," replied the Superioress, feigning assent to her humble sentiment, "it is not exactly to preserve it that we ask you for it. It is because it seems to us that it would greatly contribute to the union you so much desire." "My dear child," replied St. Chantal seriously, "I would give you a thousand hearts for that, and would to God that mine might be broken into a thousand pieces, be annihilated for so laudable an end!" Then the Sisters having solemnly promised eternal union, she consented to draw up an authentic Act by which she bequeathed her heart to the convent of Paris. She attached to it only one condition, one that reveals her admirable delicacy of soul; "provided, however, that it can be taken from my body without opening it in the usual manner, but only by the side, and that, if possible, it be one of our Sisters who will render me this service."[1]

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[1] Mother de Chaugy and all historians that have copied her merely mention this long and important journey. We shall try to give a full account of it, following Mother de Chantal by means of the special mementos of her visits preserved in each convent. Everywhere the Sisters committed to writing all that she said to them. Some of these papers have been lost; but the manuscript Histories of the Foundations will afford us the greatest assistance.

[2] *Lettres inédites de Sainte Chantal.* Letter ccxlix.

Her long sojourn in Paris revealed her humility not less than her love for peace and union. As she was no longer Superioress, she not only refused all authority, but she took the last place, knelt for the Superioress's blessing, ranged in line to receive the daily *Obedience*, and used to say smilingly that she had not come to teach the Sisters virtue, but to learn it from them.

Spring was approaching, and Mother de Chantal hastened to resume the general visitation of the convents which sickness and the winter had interrupted. Its importance was daily increasing in her eyes. She left Paris in the beginning of April, 1636, accompanied by the Rev. M. Marchez, her confessor, Mother Favre, and Sister de Chaugy, and travelled through Champagne, in which province there was at that date only one convent, that of Troyes, founded by Mother Favre with unheard-of difficulty. Arrived there April 12th, she was received with ringing of bells, the Sisters ranged in procession, headed by the Cross, singing the *Benedictus.* She was greatly displeased at so much display, but her "Stop, stop, Sisters!" was wholly disregarded. The Sisters were so delighted to see her, whom many of them had never seen, that they would listen to no expostulation. All the rest of the day they thronged around her with feelings of veneration, opened to her their soul, confided to her their troubles, and asked her advice on those thousand little points of perfection upon which every true religious is desirous of instruction. She next went over the whole house carefully, to ascertain whether the Rules of the Institute, even the least, were faithfully observed. One thing alone pained her. They were then building the convent, and the architect, as often happens, too much in love with his art, had made embellishments suited to a secular house. It would have taken very little to induce the venerable Mother, for the purpose of giving a lasting lesson of simplicity and poverty to her Order, to insist on the ornamental work being removed. She exacted, however, that the rest of the building should be finished in a simpler style, "as," she said, "was becoming the spouses of Him who had not whereon to lay His head." [1]

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[1] The original contract, of which a copy is given by Bishop Maupas, p. 240, is now in the hands of Count d'Hauterive, formerly head of the Department of Foreign Affairs, residing in Paris.

After devoting an entire day to her children, she went on the next to visit the Carmelite nuns, who had greatly assisted the Visitation of Troyes in the painful days of its foundation. She thanked them heartily for their kindness. She used to say that a good understanding among Religious Orders was a mark of perfect union with God, a sign that they were truly the cherished children of the same Heavenly Father. Such was the veneration with which she inspired the Daughters of Carmel that they cut off a piece of her habit to keep as a relic.

It was during this visit that our saint had a pleasure long desired. She met there that good Mother Marie de la Trinité, whom she had known so intimately in Dijon, thirty years before. It was to her that she had confided her aspirations toward Carmel, and from whom she had received the prophetic answer: "No, no, you will never be a Daughter of St. Teresa. You will be her sister, and like her the Foundress of a great Religious Order." Since that time Mother Marie de la Trinité had founded Carmelite convents at Rouen, Caen, Châtillon, and Troyes. In 1636 she was living at the last-named place with so great a reputation for sanctity that the different convents were even then disputing the right to her heart after death. St. Chantal had been exceedingly desirous to see her once more. "O Mother," she had written to her, "I think my soul would melt in holy sweetness could I have the happiness of conversing with you, heart to heart, on the love of Our Lord Jesus Christ." Their interview excited the admiration of all who witnessed it. "Our Sisters thought themselves in heaven," say the old Carmelite *Chronicles*, "when they saw those two seraphs. Their conversation represented to the life that of which the Prophet Isaias speaks, one exclaiming and the other repeating: *Holy, holy, holy!* It was a pleasure to stand apart and watch them opening their heart to each other. When night obliged them to separate, many marks of holy tenderness were exchanged between them. As a proof of her unchanging affection, the blessed Mother de Chantal presented the holy Prioress with what she called her 'precious treasure.' This was a little picture of a rose, in the centre of which was the figure of the Holy Infant Jesus. It had been sent to her once on her feast-day by St. Francis de Sales. She had pasted on the back the following lines, cut from the holy Bishop's letter that accompanied the pious gift:

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[1] *Fondation inédite de Troyes,* p. 429.

Ma mère, en cette rose
Notre vie est enclose.[1]

Taking it from her *Constitutions*, which she always carried about her, she handed it to Mother Marie de la Trinité, saying: 'I give you, as to my dearest Mother, what I love best in this world.' In words full of humility she next recommended to her the house of Troyes, called her its Mother, and expressed a fervent wish that an intimate friendship should exist between the Order of the Visitation and that of Carmel. On quitting us she left our convent embalmed with the sweet odor of Jesus Christ and her own virtues, which she everywhere diffused."[1]

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[1] "My Mother, in this rose
Our life is enclosed."

From Champagne she passed into Burgundy and stopped some time in Dijon, where the Sisters, deeply impressed by her sanctity, eagerly gathered up and hid away everything she used, a habit, a veil, some linen, her silver cross,—precious relics which they preserved until the Revolution of '93. They also wrote down with filial care in blank-books, which were kept for a long time, but of which we have at present only too short an abridgment, all the private and general counsels she gave them. They contain excellent instructions upon humility, poverty, obedience, detachment from self, and love of the Cross; for as this great saint advanced in life, she could speak only of what she was accustomed to call the genuine virtues.[2]

A great consolation awaited her in Autun, where she tarried but a day. There reigned in the convent such peace, union, simplicity, and frankness toward Superiors, that none of the Sisters had anything special to say to Mother de Chantal. In less than three hours, the thirty-nine religious of the community rendered to her their account of conscience. She was charmed. "But, my daughter," she said again and again to Madame de Toulongeon, "would you have said that it would take me only three hours to speak with all the Sisters here! I could not have a better proof of the excellence of both Superiors and inferiors." Her great experience had, in fact, taught her that religious communities are disunited and destroyed when, no longer satisfied with those to whom God has confided the care of their soul, they begin to seek advice from without. It was on this account that she used to insist upon Superioresses opposing, as far as they could, all such communication with persons not charged with the direction of the community. Levity, curiosity, and love of change, she used to say, often creep into such interviews. "Let us eat our own bread," she incessantly repeated, "it is the best."

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[1] *Chroniques de l'Ordre des Carmélites.* Troyes, 1856, vol. iii. p. 465.

[2] *Annales de la Visitation de Dijon,* p. 60.

Judging that her presence was unnecessary in a house so full of the true spirit of the Institute, she shortened her visit in spite of the earnest entreaties of the Sisters. At the moment of departure, her thirty-nine daughters were ranged near the door as she passed out. "Adieu! my daughters," she said to them. "I think you are all good." To this the Superioress replied that there was not enough recollection in the house, and that she herself was the cause of it, for she had less than any of the others. "I hope you say that through humility," replied our saint; "for a convent without recollection would be a place of disorder rather than of piety."

As she was leaving, one of the most prominent men of the place, having just learned of her presence in the city, came running to beg her to go and apply a relic of the saintly Francis de Sales to one of his relatives, afflicted for many years with a grave infirmity. Full of faith, he declared aloud that the application of the relics of one saint by another saint would infallibly lead to a cure. It was impossible for Mother de Chantal to refuse anything to the poor or the sick, and she was on the point of yielding when she learned that there was something providential in the lady's sickness. She excused herself, therefore, thus proving her respect for the least indication of God's will.[1]

From Autun she proceeded to Mâcon, where she found an immense crowd awaiting her on the road. She had never been in that city. Her visit was, consequently, an event. All the ladies of the place called upon her, among them the wife of President de Framaye. This lady had her little daughter, then about two years old, in her arms. Our saint approached, and caressing the child, said: "This little one is for us." Some years after the child declared her determination to become a nun, and pushed the point so far as to scale the convent wall by night. She died young, leaving in the community the perfume of her virtues.

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[1] *Fondation inédite d'Autun*, p. 230.

Mother de Chantal remained only two days in Mâcon. On the second the Superioress, wishing to recreate her, and knowing that she took pleasure only in things of devotion, made the Sisters sing a *Stabat Mater* arranged in four parts. They had very beautiful voices, and played well. Mother de Chantal listened with great recollection. When they had finished she said to them in a grave and serious tone: "My daughters, it is very beautiful, but I wish you never to sing anything of this kind again, and to remember that it is contrary to the simplicity of the Institute." She then reprimanded the Superioress, who knelt down and received the reproof in profound humility.[1]

At Lyons, whither Mother de Chantal next repaired, she remained fifteen days, dividing her time between the two convents of Bellecour and Antiquaille. In the latter, which had just opened its doors to the Sisters of Villefranche, menaced by the horrors of war, there were ninety nuns. Our saint was delighted to see so many of her daughters living together in such silence, recollection, and cordiality, as left her nothing to desire on those points. She particularly admired the perfect union reigning between the newly-elected Superioress and her predecessor. She declared that it afforded her the greatest consolation.[2]

Leaving Lyons, she stopped at Valence, and addressed to the Sisters a few pious words, which they at once carefully committed to paper. As she was bidding them adieu at the door a Sister presented her with a small box of *Agnus Dei*, apologizing at the same time for having so little to offer. The saint listened graciously, thanked her, but added: "O my daughter, I should be still better satisfied to know that you were so poor as to have nothing to offer me." [3]

She then embarked on the Rhone and sailed down to Pont-Saint-Esprit, where she arrived on the 23d of June. She found the convent there extremely poor. She encouraged the Sisters, went through the town to select a proper site for building, bought a lot, and told the Superioress to trust God for the payment of it, assuring her that He would soon come to her aid. Her words were shortly after verified most wonderfully.[1]

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[1] *Fondation inédite de Mâcon.* (Archives of the convent of Mâcon.)

[2] *Fondation inédite du deuxième Monastère de Lyon*, p. 325.

[3] *Fondation inédite de Valence*, p. 165.

Just as she was leaving Pont-Saint-Esprit, and was already on her way to take the boat down the Rhone to Avignon, the sky clouded over and gave every indication of an approaching storm. They tried to persuade her to remain a while longer, but she replied with her characteristic prudence: "If there is danger, we must not tempt God. Let us hear what the boatmen think about it." The latter assured her that they could reach port before the storm came on. "That is sufficient," replied the saint. "Our blessed Father placed himself at the mercy of Divine Providence on the word of a boatman, for Almighty God has given them understanding in what pertains to their pursuits." She reached Avignon on the eve of Pentecost, 1636, and was received at the convent, as almost everywhere else, processionally, with the ringing of bells and all possible solemnity. Mother de Villars, the Superioress, presented to her the keys of the house, and the Sister Assistant handed her holy water to sprinkle the Sisters. The latter, however, she declined. The Chantresses intoned the *Benedictus*, which she vainly tried to interrupt, for the Sisters were so overjoyed at seeing her that they paid no attention to her entreaties, and even added the *Laudate Dominum* whilst she was adoring the Blessed Sacrament. As she left the choir, she was met by the Sisters of the Little Habit, "dressed like angels," who greeted her with verses expressive of joy. She remained five days in the convent, spoke with each Sister in private, assisted at all the exercises, answered the questions put to her, and never tired talking about "the holy love of God and of their humble Institute." "Believe me, my dearest Sisters," she said on parting from them, "I carry you all in my heart. I beg of you, also, the favor of a place in yours, and that you entreat Our Lord that what remains to me of life may be employed according to His good pleasure, and that He have mercy on me."[2]

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[1] *Fondation inédite du Pont-Saint-Esprit*, p. 482.

[2] *Fondation inédite d'Avignon*, p. 191.

Provence next welcomed the great Foundress. Every town greeted her with ovations. It was remarked that, as soon as she set foot in the province, the weather suddenly changed. Gentle showers began to fall two or three times a week, and cooled the stifling atmosphere. Such rains were so unusual in Provence that the people proclaimed them miraculous. It might be said that the very soil was conscious of the tread of a saint, for that year was one of extraordinary abundance.[1]

At Arles, the first place in Provence visited by St. Chantal, the inhabitants ran out in crowds to meet her and accompanied her with shouts of joy to the convent, where she spent the night. The next day, as she was preparing to resume her journey, an unknown lady came to invite her to dine with her. Mother de Chantal never accepted such invitations when her own convents were at hand. But this time, after reflecting a moment, her eyes raised toward heaven, she turned to the lady, saying: "Yes, my daughter, with pleasure." The lady, full of faith, instead of sitting at table with her holy guest, wished to serve her with her own hands. The saint allowed her to do so, to the great astonishment of the Sister who was with her, for it was quite different from her usual mode of acting. Dinner over, Mother de Chantal rose to go. At that moment, her hostess, deeply affected, and no longer able to restrain her gratitude, cast herself at her feet, exclaiming: "Mother, for three months I have been languishing with fever. You entered my house, and I am cured." [2]

From Arles, the holy Mother went to Aix, where her reception was even more honorable than elsewhere. At over a day's journey from the city, they met on the road vehicles belonging to the most distinguished ladies of the province, who had come out to welcome and escort the saint. As they advanced, the concourse increased, the road was crowded, and the air resounded with shouts of: "The saint! Here is the saint!" As soon as she reached the convent she was waited on by the members of Parliament and the Exchequer, and soon after by the Archbishop of Arles. After a long conversation with her His Lordship remarked to the Superioress: "Truly, no one could see your incomparable Mother without noticing her sanctity." Mgr. Pierre de Cornulier, Bishop of Rennes, who happened to be in Arles at the time, was so impressed by her appearance that he knelt and asked her blessing. The humble Mother began to tremble, tears sprang to her eyes, and she stood confounded, unable to utter a word. The Bishop was so charmed with all that he saw that he resolved to go to Savoy "in order," as he declared, "to enjoy at leisure for once in my life the salutary conversation of this saint." [1]

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[1] Depositions of Mother de Sonnaz and Mother de Monthouz, *super art.* xlix.

[2] *Fondation inédite d'Arles,* p. 355. *Mémoires* of Mother de Chaugy.

From Aix she proceeded to Marseilles, where she was received with demonstrations of joy and respect not less enthusiastic. The Sisters had never before seen their venerable Foundress, and they took advantage of this, her first visit to them, to obtain souvenirs, which they kept as relics. They changed her linen, habit, and veil, carefully preserving those that she laid aside. The saint never tired watching the recollection of the Sisters and their attention to God. "Ah!" she wrote, "if you had seen that house, you would have been struck with admiration. I do not know where I have ever been more gratified at the true spirit of prayer, union, exactitude, and very great simplicity that reigned there." [2]

The other convents of Provence were too distant to admit of Mother de Chantal's going to them; so it was arranged that the Superioresses of Sisteron, Digne, Toulon, Draguignan, Grasse, and Forcalquier should come to Aix, to confer with her on the state of their respective communities. Would that we could depict the joy of these venerable nuns gathered round their holy Foundress! Several wrote to their communities that now they would not die without having had a moment of perfect happiness in this world, since they had seen their saintly Mother. The fourteen days they spent together were employed in examining and deciding numerous little difficulties arising from the customs and habits of the south of France, so different from those of the north. Nor did they neglect this opportunity to open their heart to their venerable Mother, who cordially reciprocated their respect, confidence, and affection. At the moment of parting the Sisters betrayed their feelings in abundant tears. What most affected them and led them to fear her approaching end was not precisely her age, for she was still vigorous and active enough to promise still many years; it was rather that high state of consummation in God, that sort of divine maturity which, when it appears in the saints, indicates that the hour of their departure from earth is not far off. Convinced that they would see her no more in this world, they could not take their eyes off her, they could not satisfy their affection for her. Her last words were especially remarked. She earnestly exhorted the Superioresses to be more and more watchful over strict observance of Rule in their respective houses, to crush selfish tenderness, both corporal and spiritual, in their Sisters, and carefully to inculcate these words of the Divine Master: "If any one wishes to come after Me, let him renounce himself, take up his cross, and follow Me." To these three practices: self-renunciation by holy abnegation; the taking up of one's cross, that is to say, all kinds of mortification, with fidelity; and the following Our Lord by a generous practice of virtue, she added three kinds of love: love of God, love of our neighbor, and love of one's own abjection. By these means she hoped they would all meet in heaven, and dwell together in eternal happiness. With these words she blessed them, embraced them, and charged them with assurances of her maternal affection for every member of their respective communities. The Superioresses returned home deeply affected and impressed by all they had seen. Their greatest consolation ever after was to relate to their Sisters the words and actions of her whom they no longer called by any other title than that of "the saint."[1]

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[1] *Fondation inédite d'Aix*, p. 216.

[2] *Fondation inédite de Marseilles.*

Before leaving the south of France Mother de Chantal desired to visit the convent of Montpellier. We remember that, in 1631, when Mother de Marigny went to found that convent, she was obliged to resign herself to listen to the complimentary speeches addressed to her by governors, magistrates, and clergymen. What, then, was to be expected on Mother de Chantal's arrival? As soon as it was made known, preparations were commenced for a formal reception. The clergy, the nobility, and the magistrates went successively and in a body to welcome her with addresses so eulogistic that "she blushed like a young girl under an insult!" She said, after the departure of the gentlemen, that, if the spirit of her blessed Father had not required her to act civilly, she would have hidden herself in a cave rather than hear such words.[1]

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[1] *Fondation inédite d'Aix*, p. 216.

Among the worthies that came to consult her mention is made of an attorney-royal named Ramiscé, a man of eminent virtue. He had long been hesitating as to whether or not he should give up the world and join some monastic institute. The doubt he was in gave him much trouble. "But, sir," said Mother de Chantal to him, "what would become of the ship of the world were all good people to withdraw from it?" And she then explained to him in glowing terms all the good a man of his position might do. Thenceforward he lived in peace, occupied with good works, and convinced that God had spoken to him by that holy woman.

From Montpellier to Avignon, Mother de Chantal passed through Nîmes, where she was obliged to stay over night. As all the hotels in the place were kept by Protestants, she refused to stop at them, preferring "a poor little hovel where wine was sold by the jug." When she presented herself at the door the good people accosted her with: "Madame, we are poor, but we are good Catholics." "Oh," she replied, "how rich you are in possessing purity of Faith!"—and she earnestly exhorted them to guard carefully their precious treasure. There was only one bed in the house, and that ragged and dirty. Our saint arranged it with her own hands, and said gaily on leaving next morning that she did not remember ever to have slept better in her whole life.

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[1] *Fondation inédite de Montpellier*, p.401.

August was drawing to a close when she reached Avignon. She had now been travelling five months, and, owing to her plethoric habit, had suffered much from the heat. But she never complained nor interrupted her journey. On the contrary, she refused every relief, and astonished every one by her activity and energy at so advanced an age, for she was then nearly seventy years old. She often rose at two o'clock in the morning, to be able to start early and hear Mass before leaving. "Old as she was," says Mother de Chaugy, "she was the alarm-clock of the party." It sometimes happened that, after having been up since daybreak, she was obliged to fast till three or four o'clock in the afternoon, and even then would often get nothing in the villages but milk, black bread, and curds; but, whether undergoing privation or fatigue, her cheerfulness was unalterable. She kept all around her bright and happy.

Her virtue shone still more clearly than her energy and activity. Every step was marked by some act of humility, poverty, mortification, or love of God. When about to start on her long journey, and during the heat of summer, Madame de Toulongeon wanted her to change her habit, which was worn and heavy, for a lighter one of Milan serge. "What! my dear daughter," she replied, "if I had on my back a habit made of Milan serge however light it might be, I should feel so weighed down by it that I should have no rest until I had laid it aside." Madame de Toulongeon begged to be notified, at least, of her arrival in Burgundy, that she herself might conduct her saintly mother to the different convents. "What shall we do about this?" St. Chantal pleasantly inquired of Mother Favre. "God knows what consolation it would be for me to have my daughter with me—but what misery! We should be obliged to have a litter, a carriage, and attendants—all that is exceedingly disagreeable to me. On our arrival at any place they would say: 'It is Mother de Chantal going to Sainte-Marie.' It sounds like the world, and I am opposed to it. I like so much," she added, "our closed litter, our ecclesiastic, and our two muleteers."

On arriving at any city she carefully avoided public receptions. As a general thing, she was put into the finest guest-chambers. Sometimes she was told that the chamber allotted to her had been occupied by the King, and that she was using the same furniture as His Majesty. All that deeply mortified her, and at night she and her companions would fold up the large silken coverlets, and use instead their own habits. "For God's sake, Sister," she used to say, "let us be up and off early to-morrow morning to get rid of all this worldly parade." She was never happier than when lodged badly upon a bed of straw or leaves, after a scanty supper, as occasionally happened at a time in which roads were not kept in repair, nor relays and hotels provided as at the present day.

The same humility and mortification were remarked in our saint when she stopped at convents. She would never occupy the Superioress's seat, say the *Benedicite* or Grace at table, nor address the Sisters in Chapter. Not being Superioress, she used to say she could not open her mouth there. Sometimes they covered her table with a piece of green baize as a mark of respect; but as soon as she perceived it, she would take it off, saying: "Am I a great lady? Are these worldly things necessary?" In the same spirit she refused kneeling-benches and cushions prepared for her in the choir. "Take them away, Sisters," she would say: "where is holy poverty?" And she would kneel upon the bare floor.

Her journey was no interruption to her spiritual exercises, nor could the variety of scenes through which she passed divert her thoughts from God. At fine points of view she would cast a rapid glance around and raise her eyes toward heaven, as if to say that the beauties of nature were nothing compared with the splendor beyond the skies. On rugged roads, bordered with precipices, she would smile at the terror of her young secretaries, no danger being capable of drawing from her a cry or an exclamation of fright. She whiled away the length of the route with canticles and converse of God; and at such moments her countenance often sparkled with starlike radiance.

But it was, above all, when in her convents, among her daughters, that it was delightful to hear her. Her instructions were short, animated, glowing, interspersed with burning words, which penetrated the memory like so many arrows. Sometimes she recommended humility, abjection, self-contempt; again, she unmasked the thousand little imperfections that occasionally lie hid beneath the religious habit; more frequently, her subject was union, concord, love, especially love, which in her latter years became the almost exclusive matter of her conferences. Upon all these topics, without effort or preparation, there flowed from her lips words so beautiful that once heard they were never forgotten.[1]

We shall quote some of them. "My God!" she exclaimed one day, "how greatly I fear lest this multitude of houses everywhere arising will lead to relaxation of spirit, for want of members and Superioresses solidly grounded in virtue! Oh, how carefully we must guard against this! otherwise there will be many dove-cots in which our doves will die of hunger, spiritual as well as corporal."

To avoid such a misfortune, she conjured Superioresses to seek good vocations. "Do not look for dowries," she incessantly repeated, "seek vocations. She that wishes to have silver postulants will never have golden religious." The vocation found, she aimed at rooting vanity out of the heart. "If I knew that vanity had gained entrance into any of our convents," she used to say, "I should be tempted to ask God for fire from heaven to destroy that house, and purge the Institute of it. It may be said that I know not of what spirit I am. But if they who speak thus knew what humility is in the religious life, and what vanity produces in it, they would side with me." Then with deep feeling she would add: "No, no, nothing could more readily shorten my days than to see vanity and disunion among the members of our Institute."

She joins vanity and disunion as mother and daughter, cause and effect. "Ah! would to God," she said, "that my lips might be pierced with a red-hot iron, that those of the Sisters of the Visitation might be forever closed to the least word contrary to that charity, union, and gentleness which should ever reign among them!" Humility, which unites hearts as pride estranges them, was one of her favorite topics. She could find no words sufficiently strong to praise this heavenly virtue. "It is the Superioress-General of our Order," she used to say, "and if all our convents obeyed her, there would never be in them peril or disunion."

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[1] See the whole of Part III. of the *Mémoires* of Mother de Chaugy; also a small manuscript collection of reminiscences written by Mother Favrot, and entitled: *Des Vertus que notre Bienheureuse Mère pratiquait en Voyage.*

To humility she joined obedience. But what kind of obedience? Not only prompt, cheerful, and generous, but altogether blind, in order to be perfectly supernatural. "Jesus!" she used to exclaim, "how I detest that anxiety of the Sisters to have capable and very experienced Superioresses! Believe me, the notion that great capacity is necessary in a Superioress totally destroys the purity of obedience, for it is not difficult to obey an angel. As for myself," she added, "if the youngest of our professed Sisters were appointed my Superioress, I should love her with my whole heart."

But far above obedience, far above humility, to unite souls and make them advance in God's ways, she placed charity—charity, the first and the last word in the code of perfection. She spoke of it at all times. "In these last days of my life," she used to say, "I wish to speak of nothing but charity, of nothing but love, because farewell words are the most deeply impressed upon the heart. Charity, mutual love—behold the *titbit* that I wish to leave our Sisters in dying." She returned to this point so often that Sister de Chaugy one day said to her with a smile: "Mother, I am going to write everywhere that you are in your old age, and that, like your patron St. John, you speak of nothing but love." "My child," replied the saint very gently, but gravely, "do not make that comparison, for we should not treat the saints so irreverently as to compare them with miserable sinners. But it is true that, were I to follow my attraction, and did I not fear annoying our Sisters, I should never speak to them of anything but love."

Whilst inculcating such doctrine throughout her convents in words as beautiful as the teaching itself, Mother de Chantal did not forget those she had not seen, and which she did not expect to visit. As Mother and Foundress, her eyes were constantly turned toward her eighty convents. She kept up with all the Superioresses, and we might almost say with all the Sisters, an immense correspondence, for which three or four secretaries failed, at last, to suffice. She was often obliged to pause on her route for several days, to answer the numberless letters received. The correspondence of the closing years of Mother de Chantal's life more clearly than ever reveals her great and masculine mind, her widespread experience, her increasing holiness. The general government of her convents, the reciprocal duties of Superioresses and inferiors, the choice of novices, the discernment of character, appreciation of the ways of God in the conduct of souls, the means to attain perfection,—all are thoroughly discussed in her correspondence, all decided with a single stroke of the pen, but so clearly and judiciously that the reader regrets not its brevity. Firmness, energy, courage, form the basis of this correspondence, though kindness, mildness, and tenderness daily gain ground in it. It is evident that, as she advanced in life, love inundated and overflowed her great soul. She could no longer do without her daughters; she begged them, she urged them to write to her often; she scolded if they lost the least opportunity to send her their news. But how did she scold them? In language that came from the heart and went straight to the heart. "I write now only to scold you, my darling," she wrote to Mother de Blonay, "and to tell you that you should not treat me so, allowing opportunities of writing to me to pass. Indeed, if I had you here, I would give you a tight hug to punish you. Ah! well, I forgive the past, but do not repeat your offence. Do you not know how dearly I love my poor old child and her letters too?"[1]

Meanwhile winter was coming on, and as Mother de Chantal proposed visiting the convents of Franche-Comte, Lorraine, Picardy, and Normandy, she hastened from southern France. On her way from Avignon to Grenoble, she received a letter from the Bishop of Geneva, recalling her to Annecy. He had been notified of the fatigue the journey had caused her, and, fearing lest her health, especially at her advanced age, might be affected by it, he commanded her to discontinue her visitation, and return to Annecy by the shortest route. She obeyed, and re-entered the cradle of her religious life, with that longing for solitude and silence which, far from being weakened, had daily increased in her soul. She hoped at last to rest. But her rest was to be found only in the tomb.

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[1] There are many letters in this style which, unfortunately, have hitherto lain concealed. Messrs. Migne and Ed. de Barthélemy have rendered an important service by recently publishing a large number of them.

CHAPTER XIV.

ST. CHANTAL'S LAST TRIALS.—HER INTERIOR TROUBLES.—DEATH OF MOTHER DE CHÂTEL, MOTHER FAVRE, AND MOTHER DE BRÉCHARD.—FOUNDATION OF THE VISITATION IN TURIN.

1637—1640.

St. Chantal was drawing toward the close of her career and the realization of her mission. She was about to found the seventy-sixth house of her Order, and preparing for the establishment of four or five others, which would raise the number of Visitation convents to eighty. She had successively passed through Lorraine, France, Savoy, and Switzerland, everywhere remembered as a saint, and, as it were, borne in triumph. For guides in so extraordinary a career, Almighty God had given her the two greatest saints of the age, St. Francis de Sales and St. Vincent de Paul; and when she stood in need of strong women as instruments in her work, she had, happily, found souls whose virtues surpassed both her need and her expectation. So many crowns had fallen upon her brow; but one more was wanting, namely, the crown of adversity, which gives value to all others. Without it even the most beautiful life is incomplete. It fails in what, as Bossuet aptly remarks, "misfortune adds to virtue."

God had not waited till this late period to bestow upon Mother de Chantal the inestimable gift of suffering. The age of sixty-eight is seldom reached without having had much to endure. When a soul gives itself to God with the generosity of a St. Chantal, Jesus Christ crucified does not leave it so many years without touching it with His sceptre. "And I, my child," said the venerable Foundress to a young Sister tasting for the first time the bitterness of the Cross, "I have been overwhelmed by temptations for forty-one years. Should I, on that account, lose courage? No! I will hope in God even though He slay me, annihilate me forever." Then she added these humble and magnificent words: "My soul was a piece of iron so rusty with sin that the fire of divine justice was necessary to cleanse it even a little."[1]

But what were those interior trials of forty-one years compared with those that fell upon her in her declining days? About the year 1632, Almighty God pressed upon her brow, and even to blood, the crown of thorns she had been weaving so long, and commenced to prepare her for death by an agony of nine years.

She foresaw in ecstasy the meaning, duration, and utility of the martyrdom in store for her. It was the 14th of June, the feast of St. Basil. She was at recreation, when she was so suddenly and violently assailed by divine love that she lost the power of speech. She sat with closed eyes and inflamed countenance trying to divert her thoughts by spinning. But, despite her efforts, she was obliged to pause continually in the midst of her work. When she saw that resistance was useless to conceal the grace conferred upon her, she asked the Sisters to sing a few verses of a hymn composed by Mother de Bréchard, in which she herself tried to join. Such singing somewhat calmed her, and finding that she had regained control of her feelings, she commenced to speak in burning words: "My dear children, neither St. Basil nor the majority of our holy Fathers and pillars of the Church were martyred, and what, think you, was the reason?"

After the Sisters had each given some answer, she continued: "And I, I think it was because there is a martyrdom that is called the martyrdom of love. In it God preserves the life of His servants, to render them martyrs and confessors at the same time. And this is the martyrdom to which the Sisters of the Visitation are called." A Sister asked her in what it consisted. "Give your will to God," she answered, "and you will feel it. Divine love drives a sword into the inmost parts of our soul, and separates us from ourselves. I know a soul whom love has separated from what was most dear more effectually than tyrants could separate the soul from her body by a stroke of the sword."

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[1] *Mémoires* of Mother de Chaugy, p. 460.

"And how long does that martyrdom last?" asked a Sister.

"From the moment the soul abandons itself to God till the hour of death. But this is to be understood of generous hearts, hearts that, without revoking their gift, are faithful to love. As for pusillanimous hearts, Our Lord does not attempt to martyrize them. He is satisfied with allowing them to pursue their own little way, lest they escape Him should He urge them too much."

"Can the martyrdom of love," asked another, "equal the martyrdom of the body?"

"Yes, certainly," was the answer, "the one yields not to the other, for love is as strong as death. The martyrs of love suffer more by living to do the will of God than if they were to lose a thousand lives in proof of their faith, love, and fidelity."

The day following that on which Almighty God had revealed to her the perfection of the martyrdom of love began that agony which ended only one month before her death. Her soul was a prey to interior pains so numerous and so cruel that she no longer recognized herself. She dared neither cast her eyes on her own soul nor raise them to God. The former appeared to her sullied with sin, black with ingratitude, disfigured, horrible to contemplate. The greater the works she performed for God, the more brilliantly her perfection shone in the eyes of the world, the more did she appear to herself despoiled of virtues and merits, even of those of Jesus Christ. If we except thoughts of impurity, by which she was never assailed, there was no evil imagination that did not present itself to her mind. Doubts upon the most adorable mysteries, blasphemies against the most merciful attributes of God, the most abominable judgments of her neighbor, disputed the possession of her imagination. She used to say that her mind was like a vast park through which crawled hideous reptiles, which she could neither destroy nor drive away. When she spoke of her trials, large tears rolled down her cheeks. By night, she was heard to groan like one in agony. By day, she forgot to eat and drink. But the most terrible feature of these temptations was, that it seemed to her that God had abandoned her, that He no longer fixed His eyes on her, that He no longer cared for her. She stretched out her arms to Him, but like one in the dark to a friend departed forever. Or rather God was to her more than absent. He was her enemy. He was ever repulsing her. In vain did she endeavor to calm her terror by recalling the lovely symbols of shepherd, spouse, and friend, under which she had so often represented Him to her soul. The thought of God was to her only that of an irritated judge, a master, scorned and demanding vengeance. By degrees the community exercises relating to Him became to her a burden. She trembled when the hour for prayer drew near, and especially that for Holy Communion. Then the thought of her own sinfulness and the infinite sanctity of God pierced her like swords. Even spiritual reading, once her delight, now became an agony, because it spoke to her of God. She told one of the Sisters that she could not hear it in the refectory without feeling as if darts were transpiercing her heart.

Up to the present, even when overwhelmed by the most violent interior trials, she had had light for the spiritual direction of others. Now all was changed. This duty became for her the source of frightful temptations. She could no longer hear an interior trial spoken of without suffering it, nor a sin named without imagining she had committed it. One day Mother de Blonay was speaking to her of some interior affliction. The saint interrupted her, exclaiming with clasped hands and eyes suffused with tears, "O dear Mother, cease, cease! I shall be overwhelmed by this temptation. Already I see it coming. It is even now attacking me." To another Sister she said: "Ah! Sister, if you knew the painful state of my mind! I am attacked at once by all the spiritual temptations of which my daughters speak to me. God inspires me with what to say for their consolation, but I continue in my misery. Ought I not desire to be in the hands of a good Superioress, who could direct me in this state of weakness and painful blindness?"

Oh, what a spectacle for consideration! That strong woman, that great and solid intellect! Behold her, crushed, disheartened, incapable of guiding herself, forced to grope along that spiritual road which she knows so well for others, of which she has said things so beautiful, but which is now all darkness for herself! This was the way God chose to make her humble. This was the way by which He maintained in humility those great saints whom we admire in history, who raised the dead, who foretold the future, and of whom we sometimes tremblingly ask ourselves, how they managed to be humble. Whilst the world bore them in triumph and kissed their feet, God humbled them in the secrecy of their own soul. He inflicted upon them humiliating mortifications, and made them undergo in the depths of their heart an agony that rendered them insensible to the applause of the world.

No words can give an idea of the violence of the temptations that assailed Mother de Chantal in the last years of her life. "See, my daughters," she would say, "I am now reduced to such a degree that nothing in the world can give me relief save this word alone, *death.* I am constantly ransacking my memory to find out how long my father, my grandfather, my ancestors lived, in order to give my soul some comfort in the thought that I have not much longer to remain in this world."

On another occasion she said: "I'll think no more of when I shall die. I have had a scruple about wasting my time in reflecting that my father lived only seventy-three years, and that I shall not live longer than he. That is idle comfort." Her usual saying was that she would have to sacrifice herself to life as the martyrs of old sacrificed themselves to death.

Her great virtues shone in the midst of these terrible trials, capable of forcing from her bitter lamentations. Tortured in her interior, she was exteriorly so cheerful and gracious that the young Sisters never dreamed of her mental troubles. "In vain did the storm beat against this rose of charity," says Mother de Chaugy. "It still preserved its freshness and exquisite odor." [1]

God did not abandon His servant. He sent His angels to comfort her in her agony. Once, when a prey to deep sadness, she suddenly heard a voice saying to her: "Read the Eighth Book of the *Confessions of St. Augustine.*" Another time, when she was weeping bitterly, the same voice said: "Read the thirty-seventh chapter of the Third Book of the *Following of Christ.*"

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[1] *Mémoires*, p. 450.

Again, when her soul was overwhelmed with sorrow, St. Francis de Sales appeared to her. He was clothed in pontifical robes, seated on a throne, and full of glory and majesty. She fell on her knees before him, exclaiming:

"My blessed Father! what do you wish me to do?"

"My child," answered the saint, "God wishes you to finish with love and courage what love made you begin."

But what, above all, consoled and supported Mother de Chantal was obedience. As we have already said, she was no longer Superioress. She had placed her soul under the direction of Mother de Châtel, her Superioress, whom she obeyed with the simplicity of the youngest novice. Mother de Châtel, on her part full of wisdom and experience, firmly adhered to the same principles of direction by which St. Francis de Sales had calmed our saint in the time of her first trials; which he had so successfully applied to the ardent souls of Mother Favre and Mother de Bréchard; and by means of which he had obtained so happy a result in the direction of Mother Angélique Arnauld herself up to the day on which she passed from his prudent hands into those of the Abbé de Saint-Cyran, when she changed her spiritual way with her change of guide.

To all the moans of the saint, to all her fears of doing wrong, to all her painful disquietude about the past and the present, Mother de Châtel replied in but one word, the quintessence of genuine and sublime direction: "Speak of it neither to God nor to yourself. Never look to see what it is, in order to tell it to any one whatever, and *never make any examination of conscience on it.* Hide your trouble *from yourself*, just as if you did not feel it. *Look up to God*, and if you can speak to Him, let it be about Himself."[1]

We repeat, this is the principle of great and true direction.

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[1] *Lettres de Sainte Chantal*, 407.

It detaches the soul and divests it, as it were, of itself. It teaches not to look so much at self, but to look more at God, to be very attentive to Him and very little to self. It stifles interior pains as a fire is extinguished, namely, by want of fuel; for it is with interior trials as with all objects submitted to the magnifying lens of the human imagination, the longer we look at them, the larger they grow. The only way to destroy them is not to look at them, not even for the purpose of humbling ourselves at the sight!

St. Chantal derived so much profit from this practice that she determined to make a vow never voluntarily to fix her attention on her temptations, never to parley with them, never even to notice them. Mother de Châtel consented to her assuming this new obligation, on condition that she would make the vow for one day only and renew it every morning.[1] This afforded her some relief.

To these mental pains intense heartaches were soon added. Almighty God had already frequently wounded her in her dearest affections. Father, children, grandchildren, sons-in-law, daughter-in-law,—she had seen all die. Of her six children one only was living, and she was a widow; of all her grandchildren two only survived, and they were orphans. After having proved her in her children according to the flesh, God was now about to smite her in her daughters according to the spirit. St. Francis de Sales had followed President Frémyot to the tomb; Mother Favre, Mother de Châtel, and Mother de Bréchard were now going to follow Marie-Aimée and Celse-Bénigne.

The first was Mother Favre, and it was just, since no one was dearer than she to Mother de Chantal. For twenty-five years she had borne with her the burden of the rising Institute. Superioress successively in Paris, Lyons, Dijon, and Chambéry; foundress of the Visitation of Troyes, Montferrand, and Bourg-en-Bresse; resplendent with virtue, angelic in her poverty and purity, obedient as a child, courageous as a lion, incapable of discouragement or despondency, she had rendered the most eminent services to the Order, and won St. Chantal's highest esteem and affection. She was her *grande fille*, her *great daughter*, as she loved to call her in the words of St. Francis de Sales.

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[1] *Mémoires* of Mother de Chaugy, p. 463. Maupas, p. 247.

What added, if that were possible, to the affection she bore her, was that Almighty God was leading Mother Favre by the same painful way that the holy Foundress herself was then watering with her tears. This companionship in suffering had drawn together more closely than ever those two strong souls, both so ardent, and both then shrouded in the same darkness, crushed by the same blows.

That nothing might be wanting to her sorrow, St. Chantal had not the consolation of closing Mother Favre's eyes. Her unexpected death occurred when scarcely forty-eight years of age, when she might have hoped to give to God and the Institute still many long and useful years. As she had been suffering for some time from severe bilious attacks, the doctors ordered her to the springs; but to derive any benefit from them it would have been necessary to violate inclosure. Mother Favre preferred to die. Her approaching end was announced by an attack more serious than she had ever before endured. Her pains were so violent that, for the first time in her life, she begged the Blessed Virgin to obtain for her a little relief. She feared she would lose her mind. Her groans roused pity. "They sounded like the cries of a prisoner undergoing torture." Shortly before her death, her interior pains ceased, and she tasted upon the brink of the grave that peace to which she had been so great a stranger on earth, but with which she was to be inundated in heaven. Her countenance beamed with joy and angelic beauty. Her last sigh was so gentle that none knew she had passed away.[1]

St. Chantal started at once for Chambéry, to render the last duties to her "*grande fille*." She thus witnessed the universal regret and public marks of veneration that followed Mother Favre to the grave. She was proclaimed a saint by all, and her clothing distributed as relics.

Saddened, though at the same time consoled, by this sudden and happy demise, Mother de Chantal returned to Annecy to find Mother de Châtel preparing to follow Mother

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[1] June 14, 1637. *Vies des premières Mères*, vol. i. p. 112.

Favre. She was fifty-one years old, robust in health, old age hardly begun; but from the way she spoke it was impossible to doubt that the hour of her death was near. She notified every one of it, hastily completed all that she had commenced, and undertook nothing new. "Let us make haste," she said to Mother de Chaugy, to whom she was dictating some *Mémoires* of the early days of the Visitation. "I have only a short time left, my daughter." Then urging her still more earnestly to write about the life and virtues of St. Chantal, "Question me, my daughter," she said, "that I may forget nothing, for soon I shall be unable to tell you anything more."

When all was finished, she went to bed with the composure of a traveller awaiting the hour of departure. One morning she had just fallen into a doze when Mother Favre, beautiful and smiling, suddenly appeared holding out to her her arms. By this she knew that her hour had come, for they had promised each other that the first to see God would ask permission to come for the other.

During her illness Mother de Châtel was, as she had always been, inebriated with spiritual joy and consolation. "Dear Mother," she said to St. Chantal, "I have never had anything at heart but Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, our incomparable Father and Founder, your charity, and our little Institute." During a lethargic stupor, from which the physicians tried by various painful remedies to rouse her, the only words she uttered were, "My Mother! My good Mother!" They asked her of whom she was speaking. She answered: "I have two good Mothers, the Blessed Virgin, my most holy Mother, who is in heaven and who is now assisting me, and my worthy Mother de Chantal, who has care of me on earth." She acknowledged that she had accused herself in confession of presumption in wishing to survive the saint, in order not to leave her in her old age without the support of her first daughters. "But that was pride," she said to the Sisters, "for you are much more capable than I of serving and consoling her."

It broke St. Chantal's heart to hear all this, and to see this Superioress, whose assistance she so greatly needed in her troubles, about to leave her. To take Mother de Châtel from Mother de Chantal was to break the staff in a blind man's hand. But she had said: "Though God should slay me, yet will I love Him." Standing at the foot of Mother de Châtel's bed, suffering in her heart more than the dying nun was enduring in her body, with eyes full of tears, she watched to the last the slow progress of the malady that was taking from her the only consolation God had given her in her trials.

Mother de Châtel's death was like the death of all the saints. We never weary contemplating those weak creatures sporting with death and smiling at his attacks. "Dear Mother," she would say from time to time, "oh, how good God is!" Then, either to mock her past pleasures or to smile at her present sufferings, she would exclaim: "Vanity! vanity! I am a Christian! I am a Christian!" When speech was failing her dying lips, St. Chantal suggested to her words of love: "Live Jesus!" said the saint. "And my soul shall live in Him," murmured the dying nun. "Jesus and Mary!" whispered St. Chantal. "And great St. Joseph too!" responded Mother de Châtel.

The whole night passed thus. About four next morning, Marie-Péronne, her head slightly raised, her countenance serene, her eyes, softer and brighter than ever, lifted toward heaven, tapped upon the coverlet of her bed (the sign agreed upon) to intimate that, although her tongue could no longer articulate, her heart was still faithful to her Beloved. The confessor gave her the last absolution. Then Mother de Chantal leaning over her, tears streaming from her eyes, said: "Go now, my dear Mother, go in peace to the arms of God, who is calling you. Do not forget us, my dear Mother, and take all our hearts to heaven with you." At once, as if she had been waiting for this permission to depart, she turned her eyes lovingly upon the saint, lowered her head to receive her blessing, and expired. At the same moment her countenance became resplendent, as if the light of the Divine Sun, which her holy soul was contemplating, was reflected upon her face. Far from exciting fear, as sometimes happens even among friends the most cherished, Marie-Péronne remained so attractive that even the Sisters of the Little Habit could scarcely be persuaded to leave her bedside; and when she was laid in the coffin they crowded around it to kiss her.[1]

Three weeks after, November 18, 1637, Mother de Bréchard died. She was the second Sister of the Visitation, a relative of our saint, and the godmother of one of her children, the foundress of several convents, and so noted for her virtue that her process of canonization was begun with that of St. Chantal. Eight years after her death, her remains were found flexible, ruddy, and exhaling the sweetest perfume. She welcomed death with the same ardor she had exhibited in all her undertakings. Her Superioress, trying to announce to her her approaching death in ambiguous terms, "What! Mother," she said quickly, "do you mean that I am going to die? Oh, the sweet word! To leave this land of exile!"—and she threw her arms around the Mother's neck, thanking her for the good news; then, turning to the Sisters, she exclaimed: "Ah! what do you think of this kind Mother who has come to tell me that I shall soon go to see my God? Oh, what joy! what happiness!" As death approached, her eyes became resplendent, her face grew radiant,—incidents often seen at the death-bed of the just. We might say that the light of heaven inundates them as that of earth is withdrawn. Thus died Mother de Bréchard at Riom, at the age of fifty-seven, laden with works and merits.[2]

Doubtless, deaths so glorious and happy consoled Mother de Chantal, though not less bitter to her heart. They left her more and more alone with the daily increasing burden of her interior trials. She wrote to a Superioress that *her miserable old age had been well despoiled;* that *her dear first companions were all going to heaven and leaving her on earth full of misery;* that *they were ripe fruit ready to be served at the table of the Heavenly King;* but that *she was left upon the tree, because she was still green, perhaps decayed or worm-eaten.* The letter that contained these lines was stained with her tears.

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[1] *Vies des premières Mères*, vol. i. p. 427. Letter of St. Chantal to Mother Angélique, 407.

[2] *Vies des premières Mères*, vol. i. p. 204.

The death of Mother de Châtel necessitated the election of a Superioress for Annecy. All eyes turned toward Mother de Chantal; and although she begged the Sisters on her knees to leave her at liberty in her old age to think of herself alone, she was elected to the vacant post. For a moment she could not restrain her tears. But her natural energy soon gained the ascendency, and feeling that this would be her last triennial, she resolved to employ it vigorously for the advancement of her Order. "This triennial," she used to say, "must profit for eternity. It must be the everliving root of perfect observance and of the spirit of the Visitation."

On the Saturday after her election she assembled the community in Chapter, and addressed them in a way which proved that her great soul had lost nothing of its ancient vigor. "Since God has again committed to me the special care of you, I am resolved, with the divine assistance, to omit nothing conducive to your advancement in the way to Him. I believe that God Himself has laid this charge upon me, for I prayed much on this occasion. His goodness knows that it was not my choice, and that I see in it purely His will alone. But, my dearest Sisters, I shall not hide it from you, I tell you openly, this will be my last triennial, and during it, with God's assistance, I shall consume myself in your service. I consecrate to you my soul for this end. I shall employ all the strength of my body and the little mind that God has given me to assist and serve you. I never looked forward to so many years of life, I never thought my pilgrimage would be so prolonged. No one else thought it. But since it pleases God that, at the close of my life, I should undertake this triennial, I shall for the last time put my hand to this vineyard, I shall make use of all my power and strength to render it productive. I do not know, my dear Sisters, whether God will allow me to serve you the whole of this triennial, for life at my advanced age is very uncertain. But whether He takes me away in the beginning, in the middle, or at the end of it, is to me a matter of perfect indifference. May His good pleasure be done! His goodness, however, inspires me with the hope that, after this triennial, He will grant me some months or some years of repose, as it may please Him, to think of myself. For alas! Sisters, for twenty-seven years I have been thinking of others, with scarcely any leisure to think of myself. God will dispose of my years, of my life, and of my death according to His holy will. I do not trouble myself about it. But I say to you, Sisters, be not astonished if you find me more watchful over you than ever, for I feel that this triennial must effect something, and that, toward the close of my life, you should give me the satisfaction of seeing you more fully correspond to God's designs over you and to my humble efforts, which are entirely devoted to you."[1]

These earnest and energetic words were instantly committed to writing by the Sisters, and circulated throughout the Institute. They excited in it a tremor of fear and ardor. The Sisters trembled at the thought of losing their venerable Mother, as her words seemed to infer, and they redoubled their zeal to profit by her last advice and example.

Not long after her election, St. Chantal received a message from the Queen, Anne of Austria, who was then expecting the birth of Louis XIV. She recommended herself to her prayers, and entreated her to have petitions offered throughout the Institute, that Almighty God would give to her a son and to Louis XIII. an heir. The saint, in whom the sublime contemplation of the things of faith had not diminished legitimate love for her country, immediately ordered public prayers; but neither her brother, the Archbishop of Bourges, nor the Sisters could prevail upon her to write to the Queen. "Ah! what am I," she said, "that I should venture to write to this great Queen? We ought to be so humble and so hidden as not to be tempted to seek human pretexts to thrust ourselves upon the great."[2]

Meanwhile the Visitation was spreading and multiplying everywhere. The provinces that already had houses of the Order were increasing in number; and those that had them not were now asking for them. Picardy was preparing the foundation of Amiens; Guienne, that of Bordeaux; Landes, that of Bayonne; Languedoc, that of Alby. Italy, toward which Mother de Chantal had taken the first step by establishing the convent of Aoste, was not to be satisfied with this, and two Italian foundations were being consolidated, that of Pignerol and that of Nice. A third was projected, that of Turin.

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[1] *Recueil inédite des Chapitres de Sainte Chantal,* manuscript 4to, Visitation of Dijon.

[2] *Lettres de Sainte Chantal,* 39.

This last-mentioned foundation had long been in question. As early as 1618, the Duchess of Mantua had spoken of it to St. Francis de Sales, who approved the design. There was every prospect at the time that the house of Turin would be one of the first founded. The project was resumed in 1620, and so energetically pursued, that every one thought the moment of its realization had come. Mother Favre was appointed by St. Francis de Sales to begin the foundation. But the death of the holy prelate; the wars and plague that desolated the unhappy country; later on, the death of Mother Favre herself, again nominated for the foundation; that of Mother de Châtel, who was to have replaced her; and above all the prejudices that arose against the Visitation, making an unfavorable impression upon the Archbishop himself and even upon the Nuncio,—all combined to delay the execution of the project from year to year for over a quarter of a century.

The establishment was, however, always most ardently desired in Turin. The Infantas, the sisters of King Victor Amadeus, Prince Thomas of Savoy, Madame Matilde, daughter of Philiberte Emmanuel, Duke of Savoy, and her son, the Marquis di Pianesse, continued to write to the saint and induce others to do the same, to entreat her to hasten the establishment of the convent. They insisted that Mother de Chantal should come in person, to gratify the desire of Victor Amadeus and his court to see the great servant of God.

But despite their earnest entreaties, neither the Bishop of Geneva nor the community of Annecy would consent to allow the venerable Foundress, then sixty-six years old, to undertake so long, fatiguing, and dangerous a journey. The affair, consequently, still dragged on until, at last, Bulls from Rome and the increasing earnestness of the court of Turin rendered hesitation no longer possible, and Mother de Chantal started from Annecy, September 14, 1638.

She went first to Rumilly, where she was received with great joy, and thence to Chambéry, where she remained several days. During her stay in that convent, she loaded all the Sisters, and even the novices, with loving caresses. There was one, very pale, very delicate, who had been declared incurable by the physicians. When she approached to embrace the saint, the latter exclaimed: "Ah! here is one that has a long course before her!" All were astonished at her words, for they knew the Sister's critical state. St. Chantal's prediction was verified, for she lived to be seventy-two years old, and was for a long time Superioress in several convents.[1] The Lay-Sisters came in turn to embrace the venerable Mother. One of them, whose hands were so chapped that she could with difficulty use them, had no sooner placed them in those of the saint than she was cured. There is still preserved at Chambéry the account of a seemingly unimportant fact, but which shows Mother de Chantal's love for obedience. On Wednesday, when all the Sisters were using the discipline, at the time marked by the Rule, our saint gave the sign to discontinue. One Sister, who probably had not heard it, took several extra strokes. Next day at recreation Mother de Chantal inquired who it was that had not obeyed the signal. "My daughter," said she seriously, "know that the strokes you gave yourself after the time were so many sacrifices offered to the demon."

On leaving Chambéry, she pursued her way through Tarantaise. As the news of her journey had spread abroad, she found the road lined with bands of peasants, come down from their villages to see her. As soon as they caught sight of her litter, they knelt and asked her blessing. Benôit-Théophile de Chevron, Archbishop of Tarantaise, and his Vicar-General, Charles-Auguste de Sales, went to meet her three leagues from Moutiers. "She was everywhere treated as a saint," wrote the latter. "I was witness of it among the inhabitants of Tarantaise, who went on their knees as she passed. The Archbishop would not allow her to stop anywhere but in his palace. He received her as a messenger from God, conferred with her as time permitted, and next day deigned to act as her guide to the Petit-Saint-Bernard, through the Val d'Aoste. He said to us joyously: 'Come, let us go with the saint.' And on our return he exclaimed: 'God be praised! This day has not been lost, for, as far as we could, we have done homage to a saint.'"[1]

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[1] *Procès de Canonisation de Sainte Chantal.*

Although the journey by the Petit-Saint-Bernard was more fatiguing than that by Mont-Cenis, Mother de Chantal had made choice of it for the purpose of visiting the convent of Val d'Aoste. It would be difficult to describe the enthusiasm that welcomed her to the city. The Marquis di Pianesse and many other noblemen went out to meet her, the people lined the roads, the bells were rung, and the churches ornamented as on a feast-day. After venerating the relics, exposed purposely for her, she repaired to the convent of the Visitation, September 21, 1638.

"At first sight," wrote the Sisters after her visit, "we thought her a little grave, but so humble, so recollected, so heavenly that, even if she had not been our venerable Foundress, we should not have hesitated to cast ourselves at her feet, to venerate in her the temple of the Holy Ghost, as did several of the laity and a very devout Canon of the Cathedral, who came to lay before her the state of his conscience."[2] They cut scraps from her veil to preserve as relics.

On leaving Val d'Aoste, a very extraordinary incident occurred. M. Derriard, Lieutenant of the province, had engaged to provide porters for the saint's litter. Among others he chose "a stranger who boasted his strength, andthat justly, for he could carry burdens three men together might have found a difficulty even in lifting. Now, scarcely had they advanced a few steps with their precious and honorable load," continues the old manuscript, "than this man, the strongest and most expert of all, commenced to stagger. He felt himself suddenly seized with weakness in all his limbs. In spite of his incredible efforts, which steeped him in perspiration, he could not support her weight. The Lieutenant began to threaten, and even applied the whip to make him go on. The unfortunate porter, however, yielding at last to his unaccountable weakness, fell to the ground. This extraordinary circumstance greatly astonished the Lieutenant, and he determined to examine into its cause. He ordered the man, who stood trembling and confused, to try to move a stone that he pointed out to him. Wonderful to relate, although immensely large and such as three or four of the strongest men would scarcely have been able to move, he succeeded in rolling it from side to side several times with as much ease as if he were playing with it. The astonishment of the lookers-on may be imagined. But recalling all that public rumor said of the scandalous life of the wretched man, they saw in the whole affair the finger of God, who would not suffer a vile slave of Satan to bear so holy a burden."[1]

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[1] *Oraison funèbre de la Mère de Chantal*, by Charles-Auguste de Sales.

[2] *Relation manuscrite du Passage de notre très-digne Mère de Chantal au Monastère de la Visitation du Val d'Aoste.* This account, signed by four Sisters, eye-witnesses, is still preserved in the archives of the convent of Annecy.

The Sisters assert in their account that this man, having returned soon after to his own province, from which he had been banished, was arrested, tried, and condemned to death on the charge of sorcery.

To recount the ovations given Mother de Chantal on her way from Aoste to Turin would be to repeat scenes already described. Cannon was fired; prelates went out to welcome her "as the greatest treasure then on earth;" royalty escorted her; and the people knelt in crowds to receive her blessing.

As she was about entering Turin, she received a message from Madame Royale, begging her to come to one of her villas where her eldest son lay dying. Mother de Chantal went immediately. She was received by the afflicted mother with every mark of veneration, and conducted to the bedside of the young Duke. Madame Royale declared that if

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[1] *Lettre de Pierre-François de Sales, Évêque d'Aoste, au Pape Benoît XIV.* This letter is to be found in a collection of letters addressed to Benedict XIV., petitioning His Holiness for the canonization of Mother de Chantal.

Mother de Chantal would only pray for him, he would be cured. But as soon as the saint knelt down, she felt urged to pray for Charles-Emmanuel, Madame Royale's second son, nor could she ask God for the elder son's recovery. She arose convinced that God called the second son to the crown. She made known her conviction to Madame Royale, zealously exhorting her to submit to the divine decree. The event proved how unerring is the light that the saints draw from God.

Mother de Chantal entered Turin, September 30, 1638, amid scenes such as we have already witnessed many times. Difficulties vanished before her humility. The Nuncio called on her and, after some hours' conversation, forgot his prejudices against the Order of the Visitation, of which, indeed, he had known little and had heard strange reports. The same happened with respect to two persons of high standing who had for years opposed the project. After seeing the saint, they lent it their hearty co-operation.

Seven months were necessary for the successful completion of the undertaking; and, assuredly, one less skilful, less esteemed than Mother de Chantal, would hardly have been able to accomplish it. During her stay in Turin she employed what time she could spare from the community in visiting the churches, which are rich in relics, and the convents, especially those of the Annunciades and the Carmelites. Besides this, she encouraged to the practice of virtue the Piedmontese ladies, who crowded to the Visitation parlors.

Rumors of war, meanwhile, began to be heard in Piedmont, and the Bishop of Geneva, Dom Juste Guérin, wrote to Mother de Chantal ordering her speedy return. On receipt of this letter she assembled the Sisters for the last time, earnestly exhorted them to the practice of the solid virtues, to humility, love of Rule, sisterly union, and deference to Annecy, the cradle of the Institute. She embraced them, presented to each a picture on which she had written a few consoling and encouraging words, and tearfully gave them her blessing. It was at the foot of a wide-spreading tree and during the noon recreation that this last and affectionate parting took place. Often before, on the same spot, she had imparted to them the clear light and holy ardor that enlightened and inflamed her own soul. On one occasion among others, her countenance "shone like a star." From that day the tree was called "The Venerable Mother's Tree," a name that it retained as long as it lived. Later, a chapel was raised on the spot, and in it was placed a picture representing Mother de Chantal receiving the Rules of the Order from St. Francis de Sales.

From Turin, which she left on April 19, 1639, she went first to Pignerol, where she paused but a little while, all being anxious to see her safe out of Piedmont. As the Pass de Suze was closed, she took the road to Dauphiny and returned to Annecy through Embrun. In the latter place she rested eight days at the Visitation. On Easter Sunday, April 24th, during the noon recreation, she appeared like one in ecstasy while speaking of the mystery of the feast. Her countenance beaming with fervor, and clapping her knees with her hands, she exclaimed: "Alleluia! Sisters, Alleluia!"[1]

Full of anxiety at the danger in which she was leaving the convents of Piedmont, she continued her journey. The death of Victor Amadeus had been the signal for war, civil and foreign. The King left an infant son to succeed him, and the two parties disputing the regency called to their aid the one Spain, the other Louis XIII. The Spanish and the French armies met upon Piedmontese territory. Mother de Chantal's uneasiness was increased by the fact that all communication was cut off, and months passed without news. Thus sped the latter part of 1639. The saint prayed, begged prayers, frequently wept, and was at times a prey to the liveliest fears.

The convent of Turin was truly in great peril. The French had besieged it, and were vigorously pushing their attack. The convent of the Visitation stood between the batteries of the opposing armies, and the Sisters saw the cannon-balls piercing the walls of their building, shattering the roof and ceilings, flying over their beds, and falling in the choir and the refectory. M. Truitart, their excellent confessor, worked day and night, carrying earth and stones to form trenches and fortifications around the inclosure, and in the evening armed himself cap-a-pie to keep guard whilst the Sisters passed the night in peace before the Blessed Sacrament.[1] During the siege a good Lay-Sister, whose duty it was to gather the vegetables, pushed her courage to heroism, though without reflecting upon it. "Mother," she said to the Superioress, "how many cannon-shots must I hear before I leave the garden when I am gathering the vegetables for the community?" "Three," answered the Superioress. Sister Jeanne-Bénigne Gojos—this was her name—took the answer literally, and never swerved from it. If she was at the other end of the inclosure, she started for the house at the third shot. On her way sometimes a dozen balls fell at her feet or passed over her head, without disturbing her peaceful recollection in God. She walked along quietly and in silence, her basket of fruit and vegetables on her head, her eyes cast down, her demeanor sweet and tranquil. One day a ball cut away half of the tree under which she happened to be standing, but left her unharmed. Another time a ball shattered the basket she was carrying, but Sister Gojos was neither frightened nor disturbed.[2] At last the city was taken by storm, but the Sisters were spared. Not a single soldier made his way into their inclosure, not a single apple was stolen from it.

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[1] *Fondation inédite de la Visitation d'Embrun.*

The Sisters of Pignerol, also, were greatly alarmed, but their fears were more speedily removed. Count d'Harcourt, commander of the French troops, confronting an army far greater than his own, wrote to Mother Anne-Catherine de Beaumont, Superioress of Pignerol, to commend himself to the prayers of the Sisters, and as he knew the poverty of the house, he sent her an alms of five hundred livres. Some days after, news came that the Spaniards had been beaten by the Count.[3] The French General, convinced that he owed his victory to the prayers of the Visitandines of Pignerol, sent them other presents. Several of the commanding officers imitated him, one giving twenty pistoles, another thirty, and a third presented a bell. In short, before the end of the war the Sisters, hitherto destitute, purchased a large and handsome house. Thus does everything turn to the good of those that love God. The storm that threatens to level the tree strengthens its roots, and enables it to lift heavenward branches fresh and vigorous.

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[1] *Fondation inédite de la Visitation de Turin.*

[2] *Vie de la dévote Sœur Jeanne-Bénigne Gojos, religieuse domestique de la Visitation.* Turin, 1846, p. 34.

[3] *Vies de quelques Supérieures*, p. 109.

This news reached Mother de Chantal in the early part of 1640, and drew from her grateful acknowledgments. She was at that time concluding a work deeply interesting to her, as she hoped much from it for the glory of God, namely, the establishment of the Lazarists in Annecy. "Ah!" she used to say, "when I think of these good Fathers hunting among the bushes and brambles, to draw from vice and error the dear sheep of our blessed Father and Shepherd, it seems to me that I grow young again on seeing them in this diocese." Her joy would have been full at the termination of this undertaking had she not received the unexpected news of her brother's death. The Archbishop of Bourges was a holy prelate. He had made astonishing progress in the practice of virtue, especially in his last years, under the direction of his saintly sister. He died the death of the just, in Paris, in the arms of the Bishop of Châlon, his nephew, and of Madame de Toulongeon, his niece. St. Chantal wept his death, and wrote on all sides to beg prayers for him and for the grace of a happy death for herself.

In such occupations and trials flowed by her three years of superiority. The day of her deposition was now drawing near. She saw it approach with the joy of a prisoner awaiting release from his chains. Several days before the Bishop of Geneva, yielding to her earnest importunities, forbade the Sisters to place her name upon the list of candidates for superiority. On Saturday before the Ascension, May 11, 1640, she assembled the Sisters in Chapter, resigned forever her authority, and asked pardon of the community for all the faults she had committed. She spoke with the fervor of a seraph and the humility of a saint. She told the Sisters to range according to rank, and then (what she had never before done in Chapter) she embraced them one after another, and bade them a last adieu as Superioress, assuring them that she would never cease to love them, that she felt for them "the tender affection of a poor old grandmother for her grandchildren."

It was now necessary to look for some one to replace her, so the Sisters cast their eyes on Mother de Blonay, whom the holy Foundress called "*sa chère cadette*," her "dear youngest child," whom St. Francis de Sales had surnamed "*la crème de la Visitation*," "the cream of the Visitation," and who, since the death of Mothers Favre, de Bréchard, and de Châtel, had the greatest reputation in the Order. The Bishop of Annecy asked the Cardinal Archbishop of Lyons to allow her to return, and his request was granted. Mother de Chantal gave utterance to her joy at the news. She wrote to Mother de Blonay: "Alleluia! My dearest daughter, alleluia! At last, thanks to God, the word of man has been effectual. Our good Bishop of Geneva has received a very noble and favorable answer from His Eminence the Cardinal. God willing, you shall soon be ours. Ah! you know how many years I have been working for this." And some days later, writing to her of the universal joy with which the news of her return had been received, she added: "But it seems to me that no happiness equals mine at seeing *ma chère cadette* returning to me, that I may spend the remainder of my days with her, and have her for my dearest Mother, my best-loved child, my sister, in whom I can fully confide. I shall write everywhere and tell my joy." [1]

Mother de Chantal's happiness on this occasion was not only that of seeing again a Sister tenderly loved, and for whom she had always felt the highest esteem; it was, above all, the joy of resuming the yoke of obedience, of again finding a portion of that peace she had derived from Mother de Châtel's guidance. She spoke of nothing but the approaching arrival of the future Superioress, urging the Sisters to love her, to obey her perfectly, and to cherish one another. If, on leaving the recreations and assemblies, she met any of the Sisters, she would say to them with a beaming countenance: "My Sisters, love! love! love!"

Mother de Blonay reached Annecy on the feast of Corpus

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[1] *Vie de la Mère de Blonay*, by Charles-Auguste de Sales, p. 174.

Christi, 1640. When St. Chantal was informed that she was at the convent door she ran joyfully to meet her, followed by the whole community. As soon as the door opened, she threw herself on her knees before her, saying as she embraced her: "At last, here is my Mother, my daughter, my sister, my soul, and my own heart!" Mother de Blonay, likewise, was on her knees, but so confused at seeing the saint in that humble posture that she knew not what to respond.[1]

St. Chantal rose, and went with the community to thank Our Lord for the happy arrival. Turning to one of the Sisters with a smile, she said: "What more have I to do here below, since my dear Annecy is so well provided with a Mother such as I could wish?"

Next morning she went to Mother de Blonay's room to bid her good-morning and inquire how she had spent the night. She then placed the care of her soul in her hands, begging her to exercise her in obedience, "for," she said, "I stand in great need of it." She told her all her pious practices, asked leave to continue them, showed her everything she had, even the profession of faith that she always wore in a little bag around her neck, and a small picture of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, which she kept in her Constitutions. She begged leave to keep these little objects, and drew out the drawer of her table, to show that she had nothing in it but a small piece of green taffeta which she sometimes used for her eyes.[2]

And now began between Mother de Blonay and Mother de Chantal one of those contests, unknown to the world, but which the Church of God will present to the eyes of its astonished enemies till the end of time. Mother de Blonay could not allow Mother de Chantal, venerable with age, radiant with sanctity and even with human glory, to take the last place beside a Sister of the Little Habit, and she wished to give her a place of honor as Foundress and Mother of the whole Order.

But our saint refused this mark of distinction. In her "old days," to use her own expression, it seemed as if she stood in need of one thing only, namely, to bury herself in humiliations. In choir and refectory she took the lowest place; she went to the kitchen to wash the dishes, she swept the stairs. At Chapter, she knelt down at the slightest admonition given by the Superioress, and humbly told her faults. All this pained Mother de Blonay. She could not bear to see the venerable Foundress at her feet. A constant struggle was the result. Mother de Blonay was continually taking the saint by the arm and leading her from the lowest place, to which, however, she as regularly returned. If she advanced to tell her faults, Mother de Blonay would run forward to meet her, and casting her arms around her, prevent her kneeling. "Alas! Mother," the saint used to say, "you are always depriving me of all my pleasures." On one pretext or another, they tried to keep her from going to wash the dishes in her turn; but she, suspicious of their designs, was always on the watch not to be dispossessed of what she called her *great happiness*, her *great honor*. Precautions were taken, also, to spare her the mortifications of Chapter. Mother de Blonay used to give her something to do, or send her to the parlor whilst it was being held. But she always found means to escape, and entered the room just as it began. Once, at the end of recreation, Mother de Blonay assembled Chapter without ringing for it as usual, thinking thus to take her by surprise; but all in vain. The saint suspected something, and abruptly terminated her conversation in the parlor. Mother de Blonay, seeing her enter, desired her to withdraw, saying that as the Chapter had begun she would be excused from attending, though she might do so on the following Saturday. Our saint obeyed, and retired with a sigh. She went to see a sick Sister in the infirmary and commended herself to her prayers, saying that she was not worthy to be with the community, that they had separated her from it, but justly. She wept and sobbed so bitterly as she spoke that neither the sick Sister nor the Infirmarian could restrain her tears.

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[1] *Vie de la Mère de Blonay*, by Charles-Auguste de Sales, p. 178.

[2] *Mémoires* of Mother de Chaugy, p. 386.

These scenes were daily renewed. The contest was carried so far that the Bishop at last interfered. But the saint pleaded her cause so forcibly and with so many good reasons that he decided in her favor. Turning a deaf ear to all that Mother de Blonay could say, he ordered that Mother de Chantal should be allowed the consolation of humbling herself as she pleased, in imitation, as the good Bishop said, of Our Lord Jesus Christ, who, though Founder of the world and of the Church, had made Himself the last of all and had kissed His disciples' feet. Such scenes filled Bishop Guérin's heart with joy. He used to exclaim with uplifted hands: "Would to God that I could now die, and that my life had never been disturbed by any other strife than that between the Superioress-elect and the Superioress-deposed of the Visitation!"[1]

"At that period," say the old *Mémoires*, "the saint appeared so extraordinarily sweet and amiable, so continually occupied with God and eternity, that it made some of us tremble lest this sacred flambeau was at its last splendor."[2]

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[1] *Vie de la Mère de Blonay*, p. 181.

[2] *Mémoires* of Mother de Chaugy, p. 270.

CHAPTER XV.

PORTRAIT OF ST. CHANTAL.

THE hour is approaching for the blessed Mother de Chantal to enter into her eternal rest. Let us, then, cast a last glance upon her venerated features.

There is in the second convent of the Visitation at Paris an original painting, which bears date of 1636, and below which is inscribed: "Our Most Honored Mother, Jeanne Frémyot, First Religious of the Order, aged about sixty-five years."[1] This portrait is the work of a good artist, although it does not bear his name. Painted at Paris at the time of our saint's visit to that city in 1636, it presents to us Mother de Chantal in the lustre of her beautiful old age. Here are, indeed, the same features, the same *ensemble* as in her portrait as a young girl, though, under the influence of age and the action of virtue, the physiognomy has somewhat changed. That high-toned expression, we had almost said that shade of haughtiness, observable in her countenance at twenty, has disappeared. The sparkling glance of the eye has softened; a sweet smile has stamped itself on her lips; the chin, a little *hard* in the earlier picture, has rounded, giving an expression of gentleness to the whole face. But in both we find the same forehead, high and broad; the same strongly defined temples betokening the energy of her character; the same high cheek-bones with the full, rosy cheeks covered, as is often seen in Burgundy, with small red veins indicating warmth of temperament; the same fine and slightly aquiline nose, the sweet mouth,—in a word, the same distinguished, majestic, and graceful bearing, tempered in age, still more than in youth, by modesty, and transfigured by goodness.

It would be interesting to place this painting beside the beautiful portrait of St. Teresa recently produced by the Bollandists. We could see at a glance the points of resemblance between these two great saints: both full of intelligence, vivacity, ardor, and firmness, but with one marked feature making the difference between them. St. Teresa's mind, like her glance, is clear, transparent, elevated, a pure intelligence ascending without effort to the most sublime ideas, and delighting in their height. St. Chantal's mind is of another turn. It is strictly practical and deeply penetrating, dealing rather with facts than with ideas, more solid than brilliant, with little or no imagination, but much rare judgment and good sense. When the physicians opened her body to embalm it, they declared that they had never seen a brain so sound, a head so well formed. It was no wonder, they said, that her judgment was so good, her mind so well balanced.[1]

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[1] See picture in front of this volume.

From their difference of intellect arose their difference of style. St. Teresa's eloquence is celebrated. She had but to open her lips or take up her pen, and ideas, figures, brilliant comparisons, flowed in abundance. St. Chantal's ideas were more quickly exhausted. As a general thing, she spoke little and briefly. "Ask me questions," she used constantly to say to the Sisters, "for I am no great preacher. I can talk only by answering." She wrote still less. Although for thirty years at the head of a new Order, raised to high degrees of prayer, deeply versed in the things of God, she wrote nothing. The little that we have of hers was noted down from her conversations and Chapters, and that without her knowledge. Her letters were collected only after her death. She wrote them very rapidly, and frequently merely dictated them, sometimes to three or four secretaries at once,[2] making them very short, saying only what was absolutely necessary with a few kind and cordial words at the end. Instructions, conversations, letters, answers,—all were purely practical. She gave them no further thought, attached to them no further importance. And yet her letters, however careless they may be, bear upon them evidences of a great mind. They are so clear, so decided, at times so sprightly and enthusiastic; they present so many thoughts in so few words, such disregard of established rule with such facility in conforming thereto, outbursts of sentiment so beautiful, clothed in so calm a light of reason and good sense, that evidently the mind guiding her pen was of the highest order.

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[1] *Mémoires* of Mother de Chaugy, p. 292.

[2] *Ibid.* p. 492.

But what is still more manifest is, that her soul was of the number of great souls. In intellect, St. Chantal has rivals, and we do not hesitate to rank her below St. Teresa; but with regard to character she stands almost alone. She possessed in the highest degree qualities very rarely united and, we might say, the most opposite: hastiness and patience, irresistible ardor and unshaken constancy, a power of self-command and the gift of influencing others that rendered her mistress everywhere. She seemed born to rule, so easily did she do so and almost without thinking of it. She had the bearing of a queen, with the eye, the voice, the gesture of a commander. Had she not been on her guard, this might have been the rock upon which she would have made shipwreck. She would have become proud, haughty, imperious, and severe, impatient of opposition. Happily, God's grace, the communicative sweetness of St. Francis de Sales, and her own piety corrected this defect whilst developing in her soul meekness and humility so much the more admirable as they were less natural.

She had, moreover, an excellent heart. Who could doubt it after reading this history? Her life is a chain of ties and attachments the most noble, the most legitimate, the most holy, though at the same time the most ardent, the most constant, the most unswerving that can be imagined. We may find hearts more tender; but in none shall we ever meet more warmth, fidelity, devotedness, and, consequently, more real love. She loved powerfully, passionately, according to the expression of St. Francis de Sales, and this it was that put the finishing stroke in making of her a great soul.

St. Chantal's beautiful gifts were but means, but stepping-stones to a great end. What would she have done with them had she remained all her life at Bourbilly? She would have loved her children there. We admit it. But would she have loved them more devotedly? She would have married them; but would she have succeeded in obtaining for them alliances better than she did? She would have closed their eyes in death (for, though living with them, she could not have prolonged their earthly existence), and then, an aged widow, shut up in a provincial castle, she would have buried the magnificent gifts that were destined for the success of the noblest enterprises. She would, in all probability, have taken her little orphan granddaughter, Marie de Chantal, to live with her. She would have reared her there in the country in a manner very solid, though not very brilliant. She would have married her to some nobleman near Bourbilly or Monthelon, who, perhaps, would never have taken her to court, and thus the result of the course which so many blame our saint for not having adopted would have been to deprive the Church of Madame de Chantal and the world of Madame de Sévigné! She did better, both for us and for herself, by following her vocation; and in this case, as in every other, God's interests concur with those of humanity.

Upon this soil of eminent qualities God sowed at an early hour the seed of sublime virtues. We have seen in this history St. Chantal's faith from her very infancy. It was firm, profound, that faith which, according to Holy Scripture, falters not, and to which success is promised. She had written with her own blood the great profession of faith of the Council of Trent, and she wore it night and day on her heart. It was her delight to hear the *Credo* sung in church. She used to say that this union of voices and hearts in one act of faith enraptured her. She honored with special devotion the holy patriarch Abraham, called in Sacred Writ the Father of the faithful, and after she had like him sacrificed her son in obedience to God's command, her veneration for him increased. She celebrated, also, in a particular manner, the feasts of the holy martyrs, because they gave their life for the faith, and those of the great Doctors of the primitive Church, because they defended it by their beautiful writings. Although she read with deep respect all the Books of Holy Scripture, none afforded her so much pleasure as the Acts of the Apostles. Those heroic pages, recording the triumphs of the rising Church, inflamed her great soul. She spoke of them with enthusiasm. When she finished her reading, she used to kiss the book and say so energetically, "*Credo et confiteor*—I believe with my heart, I confess with my lips," that her hearers were excited to admiration. Among all the mysteries of our holy religion, that which claimed her highest veneration was the mystery of the Holy Eucharist, because Our Lord Himself called it the mystery of faith. She had learned by heart the magnificent hymn of St. Thomas Aquinas, *Adoro te, devote*, and she loved to repeat those verses in which the great Doctor professes his belief in terms so magnificent. She sighed after martyrdom. "O God!" she used to say to her religious, "what a subject of humiliation for us not to have been judged worthy to confess our faith before all the tyrants of the earth!"

Her strong faith rested upon the word of God alone; hence it was invincible. Like St. Louis, she cared neither to hear the reasons that prove the truth of dogma nor the account of miracles that God had allowed to support them. As a general thing, when the *Lives of the Saints* was read at table, she used to direct such things to be omitted, saying: "What have we to do with these proofs, these miracles and revelations, except to bless God, who allowed them for some souls that had need of them? We have His word given to Holy Church, and that is enough." On another occasion she said: "I am more sure of the truth of all the articles of faith than I am of having two eyes in my head."

Upon this unshaken foundation, the word of God, she rested all her undertakings. "There is no need of human support," she once said on commencing a new house. "It is sufficient to believe firmly that God's word will always be accomplished." Another time, under exceedingly difficult circumstances, she said: "Heaven and earth may pass away, but the word of the Lord will remain forever. He has said that, if we seek His kingdom, He will provide us with everything else. I believe Him! I trust Him!" Had all creatures abandoned her, she would have experienced no trouble. Such abandonment would even have increased and strengthened her hope. The less of human support she found at hand, the more obstacles she encountered, the more she raised her heart to God. Making an extraordinary act of faith, she relied the more resolutely on the divine assistance in proportion to the failure of human help. Under the most trying circumstances, she was heard to exclaim: "God is faithful! God is faithful!" and again: "Though He should crush me, still will I hope in Him!" Thence her calmness in danger, her cheerfulness and serenity in the numerous perplexities, in the extreme poverty attending foundations; thence that sweet gaiety even in the midst of interior pains the most excruciating, that constancy and unshaken fortitude which rendered her mistress of all difficulties. In her were accomplished these beautiful words of Holy Writ: "This is the victory which overcometh the world, our faith" (I. John v. 4).

To this firm faith, to this unwavering hope, she joined the most vehement love for God, a love the boldest in all her enterprises, the most constant in difficulties, the most discreet, the most humble, and, above all, the most generous; a love that made her lead a life of entire abandonment to the Divine Will, that led her to annihilate herself in order to exalt the Beloved, and that inundated her with joy at the thought of participating in the sufferings, ignominy, and humiliations of her Saviour. She was, as she said, too happy naked to follow Jesus Christ naked, and to unite herself to Him by the immolation of self. The greatest men of the seventeenth century spoke with enthusiasm of her love. "I do not know," said one of the regular clergy, "whether divine love has ever had more complete and absolute sway over any soul, or whether there could be found on the whole earth one more perfectly abandoned to love." It was a common saying that Mother de Chantal was one of the greatest lovers that God ever had on earth.

This ardent love for God was so pure and elevated in St. Chantal that she cared neither for the joys nor the consolations nor even for the recompense of love. "To taste the sweetness of God," she said, "is not solid love; but to humble one's self, to suffer and endure, to wish to be known to God alone—ah! that is true love." One day she said: "If glory and happiness could be separated from God, I would not take one step to acquire them, for I desire to tend to God alone." She added: "I have often said to Our Lord in the midst of my troubles that, should it please Him to fix my abode in hell, provided that could be without my offending Him, and my torment could contribute to His glory, I should be satisfied, and He should still be my God."

Her whole attention, consequently, was to give herself up entirely to God's grace. "God alone! God alone!" she incessantly repeated. "Yield, yield to holy love!" she often said to the Sisters. One day, when one of them replied that that was very difficult, she exclaimed, her eyes fervently raised to heaven, as if in ecstasy: "Oh, if you knew what it is to be submissive to grace!"

A witness, sworn at the process of her canonization, attested that her soul sometimes appeared "entirely drowned in God." She herself acknowledged that she had, at times, received from her Divine Master so great a gift of love, "that it seemed as if her body was something foreign associated to her being," so far did she feel herself raised by divine love above terrestrial things.

But however pure and ardent her love may have been, St. Chantal never fell into those refinements of spirituality which then began to appear, and which later on troubled and compromised the most beautiful aspirations of piety in the seventeenth century. Her good sense protected her against such errors. Once, when in one of the largest cities of France, a religious of eminent virtue desired to confer with her upon her interior. During the conversation the former remarked that for some time she had been in such spiritual dryness and abandonment that she was forced to content herself with knowing that God is God, without daring to call Him her God, nor even to think of Him as such. "Oh, as for that," quickly responded St. Chantal, "I leave it to you, my dear Mother, for I shall never practise such abnegation. However dejected my soul may have been, it has never reached the degree of not being able to say: 'My God, Thou art my God, and the God of my heart!'" The religious replying that in the word *my* God there was not a perfect denudation of soul, the saint said: "What! will our denudation of soul ever equal that of the Son of God? And yet in the midst of the greatest of all imaginable abandonment He said, '*My* God, *My* God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?'"

Her love for God, strong, solid, and, if we may use the expression, severe, was, nevertheless, allied to piety the most tender and simple. It was pleasing, at the Christmas feast, to see with what devotion she went herself to wrap up a statue of the Infant Jesus and lay it in the crib she had prepared for it, and with what childlike joy she sang and listened to the Christmas carols written by the Sisters. She cared but little for the rhyme, provided the sentiment was devout. She even liked them to introduce some innocent and recreative strain. With the same childlike devotion, she celebrated the feast of the Epiphany, and commissioned Sister Marie-Péronne de Châtel to put into verse the journey of the Three Kings.

During Lent she exhibited the same tender piety. She spoke of nothing but the Passion. She used to say that her heart melted with grief and love at the remembrance of the sufferings and humiliations of the God-Man. The words most frequently on her lips were: "We have seen Him, and we have not recognized Him. He appeared like a leper. He is a Man of sorrows." She had them put into verse, and she often sang them at recreation. On Holy Thursday, she washed and kissed the feet of the Sisters with devotion painted on her countenance. On Good Friday and Holy Saturday, she arranged a Calvary or a little sepulchre, and spent at it whole hours in tears. On Easter Sunday, she went with the community to make the seven stations, in honor of the seven apparitions of Our Lord. On the feast of the Ascension, she never failed to go to the choir seven minutes before noon, to accompany Our Lord ascending into heaven. On Pentecost, she made the Sisters draw the gifts of the Holy Ghost, and she took particular care to understand and practise that which fell to her.

Almost always on the eve of these feasts she performed some act of penance in the refectory at the common repast. Generally, she prayed aloud, her arms in the form of a cross, begging God for the spirit of the mystery they were going to celebrate the next day. The fervor of her heart shone on her countenance and so illumined it that it sometimes became "brilliant as a star."

On all these feasts she presided at the Divine Office. She never failed in this duty up to her seventieth year, excepting when she was deposed, in which case she remained humbly in her little corner. Her voice was strong and beautiful, and so devout, that it inspired the hearer with piety. The least ceremonies she regarded with veneration, especially the chant of the Office. She used to remark the slightest faults committed in it, and whether at Annecy or elsewhere, she took the greatest precautions, making the Sisters sing it before her, singing it herself for them, multiplying her directions, that the Divine Office should be everywhere celebrated with gravity, piety, and modesty.

But it was, above all, toward the Blessed Sacrament that her devotion was the most tenderly manifested. Among the papers that she always wore on her breast was an Act of Thanksgiving to Our Lord for admitting her daily to the Holy Table. For thirty-one years she had the happiness of communicating every morning, but never did this sacred action cease to be new to her, never did it become for her a matter of custom. Had she been free to do so, she would have confessed every morning in order to carry to it a purer heart. She took great care to have beautiful flowers in the garden, and have them kept to place before the Blessed Sacrament. On Sundays and festivals the Sisters were accustomed to present her a bouquet to carry in her hand. But after holding it a moment she would send the Sister Sacristan to put it on the altar. When it had faded before the Blessed Sacrament, she used to get it again, and keep it in her cell before her crucifix. She always had one of these faded bouquets. One day, a Sister inquiring why she did so, she answered: "My thoughts are not worth the telling." But the Sister insisting, she said: "My daughter, color and fragrance are the life of these flowers. I send them before the Blessed Sacrament where, one by one, they fade and die. I want to be like them. I want my life, which is gradually passing away, to end before God whilst honoring the mystery of Holy Church." Another time, this same Sister being tormented by interior pains, Mother de Chantal gave her half the withered bouquet they had just brought her from the chapel. "My child," she said, "fold this, and lay it on your heart through reverence for the Blessed Sacrament. I have sometimes been relieved of my pains by this remedy."

Everything used at the altar inspired her with profound respect. Her most ordinary occupation was making chalice veils, altar cloths, antipendiums, and especially vestments for Holy Mass. She supplied all the churches in the villages around Annecy, and even the most distant convents of France and Italy. The priests of the Church, by whose hands the Immaculate Victim is daily offered, were to her objects of special veneration. She begged them to remember her in the Holy Sacrifice, and when any one assured her that he would do so, she used to say that that promise was dearer to her than if all the kings of the earth had promised to crown her sovereign of the world. So great was her reputation for holiness that her blessing was sometimes asked even in the presence of ecclesiastics; but she would never give it, unless directed to do so by one of them. Then she would beg the reverend gentlemen to withdraw a little, saying that it belongs to no one to give a blessing when a priest is present, this privilege being reserved to his dignity.

Her tender devotion to Our Lord was accompanied, as is always the case, with filial love for His Blessed Mother. When a mere child, she had taken Mary for her protectress, and later, when her thoughts were already inclining toward the religious life, she had chosen her for her Abbess. As a sign of perpetual servitude, she had vowed to say daily her beads. On the approach of the Blessed Virgin's feasts, she prepared for them with redoubled fervor. At these times she used to sing alone and with others the *Magnificat*, the *Ave Maris Stella*, or some other of those beautiful hymns consecrated by the filial piety of Christians to the praise of their Heavenly Mother. Of all these festivals, the Immaculate Conception was her favorite. When she could not prevail upon the Bishop of Geneva to make it a holyday in his diocese, she procured that it should at least be celebrated with great solemnity in the church of Notre Dame at Annecy.

"Our good Dean has delighted me," she said to the Sisters, when announcing this news to them, "for he assured me that, if he has to ring the great bell of Notre Dame himself, he will have it rung for the feast of the Immaculate Conception as for all great feasts." She wrote to many monasteries and abbeys to beg them to celebrate the feast with as much solemnity as possible, in order to excite the people to revere this holy prerogative. "I should consider myself blessed," she added, "to give my life in support of it." St. Bernard's beautiful prayer, "Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary," was constantly on her lips, and on many occasions she proposed no other remedy to weak, troubled, or discouraged souls than devotion to Our Lady. During her annual retreat one year, three Sisters went to her for some permissions. They found her before a statue of the Blessed Virgin, her arms in the form of a cross. Instead of answering their requests, she bade them make every day during their annual retreat a quarter of an hour's prayer before a statue of the Mother of God, "for," she said, taking up the Litany of Our Lady, "see, my children, how we have everything in Mary. If we are children, she is our Mother. If we are weak, she is strong. If we have need of grace, she is the Mother of divine grace. If we are ignorant, she is the *Seat of wisdom.* If we are sad, she is the *Cause of our joy.*" And thus she ran through the whole Litany. Then she dismissed them, begging them to pray earnestly to the Blessed Virgin for her. One of them asking, "What prayer shall we say?" the saint answered: "My child, the best and most acceptable prayer to the Blessed Virgin is to praise God for the greatness with which He has invested her, and for the choice He deigned to make of her to be His true Mother."

With this tender piety, with this strong and active love for God, there was developed in St. Chantal's soul the most zealous attachment to the Church, that sacred society founded by God on earth in the blood of His Son. Like St. Teresa, and in conformity with the advice of St. Francis de Sales, she blessed God for calling her to be a child of Holy Church. She felt all her needs, sympathized with all her sorrows, wept bitterly over the disorders that dishonored her. Few men, even few priests, of that period discharged a truer or more thorough apostolate than she. The measures that she undertook, the journeys she made for the good of souls, are hardly credible. At the age of seventy she again travelled through France, Savoy, and Italy. We shall soon see her dying on a journey, worthy end of an apostle and foundress, leaving over eighty houses founded, a number of abbeys reformed, and innumerable souls enlightened, consoled, and converted by her efforts.

Such works, and especially the founding of eighty convents devoted to prayer, could not have been accomplished in a century so good and, at the same time, so evil as the seventeenth, without exciting the opposition of the wicked and the enthusiasm of the virtuous. Mother de Chantal experienced the danger of both praise and blame. They wrote against her defamatory libels, they composed songs of derision, they calumniated her. The passions she had conquered in herself and others avenged themselves by loading her with outrage. But, as with all the saints, these outrages only showed in brighter light the wonderful humility of her great soul. "It was a real satisfaction," says one of her religious, "to observe our holy Mother's countenance on such occasions. One day, among others, some one who had asked to see her forgot himself so far as to address to her abusive language, accusing her of injustice and false charity. She listened with a calm, humble, and devout countenance, not once attempting to interrupt him. When he had finished she said to him kindly: 'God bless you, my child!' and turning to her companions, she remarked: 'See how this dear neighbor of ours mistakes. Ah! we must love him dearly. Come, let us go pray for him.'" She often made the Sisters read in recreation the libels and songs written about her. After quietly listening to them, she would respond to the indignation they provoked in words of deep humility. On leaving the parlor one day, she declared that, had she not been restrained by the fear of embarrassing those that had spoken to her contemptuously, she would have cast herself at their feet and thanked them for it with joined hands.

Her humility was still more charming in the midst of the applause and ovations that everywhere greeted her. She blushed on such occasions like a young girl under some humiliation. "Let us go away from here," she used to say to the Sisters, "these people mistake. They do not know who I am." She was often seen, particularly toward the close of her life, trembling and so confused as to be unable to utter a word, when princes commended themselves to her prayers or bishops asked her blessing. If they called her a saint, "Alas! alas!" she would exclaim, her eyes filling with tears. Nor could she endure to be called *Foundress*, a word she erased wherever she found it applied to herself. It was a disgrace, she said, to so flourishing a Congregation to attribute to it so unworthy a Foundress. She even refused to give to her religious the title of daughters, since she looked upon herself as the least, the servant of all. "I have been," she used to say, "like one of those rough outdoor servants of whom the father of the family makes use in time of harvest, and to whom he says: 'Come here. Go there. Return to this field. Go to that other.' When these poor peasants become very old, they are fit only to spin, but they cannot help saying to the children: 'Your father wanted it this way, and not that.' So," she would humbly add, "in the beginning, our blessed Father used to say to me as to the servant of the Institute, 'Go, found at Lyons. Go to Grenoble. Return here, in order to start for Bourges. Leave Bourges and go to Paris. Leave Paris and return to Dijon.' For many years I have been only going and coming in the field of this dear Father of the family. Now I am a poor miserable old woman of sixty-five. It seems to me that I can no longer be of any use to the Institute except to make known from time to time the intentions of the Father." On another occasion she wrote the following beautiful lines to Mother de la Roche: "At my present age I feel it less difficult than formerly to call them my children of whom, I see very well, I neither am nor deserve to be the Mother. But because I am their eldest sister, and their father is dead, they want to call me mother. O my God, that they should make me such, that they are not ashamed to have me for a servant! Indeed, it would be very presumptuous in me, seeing the little I have done in the Institute, to wish for any other position than that of servant, and of a useless servant too."

These humble sentiments of self extended, also, to the Order she had founded. With rare delicacy of judgment and sentiment, she held it before all others in affection, but in esteem she gave it the last place. Neither the brilliant virtues of its members, nor its rapid propagation, nor the part she had taken therein, nor even the high sanctity of St. Francis de Sales, could cloud the clearness of her judgment on this point. "No, indeed," she used to say, "we must not exalt our Institute nor praise it above others, but acknowledge frankly that, as it is one of the last born to the Church, so is it, like a little March violet, without color or brilliancy, as our holy Founder used to say." To a Sister who made some objection to this, she replied with good sense and wit: "My dear daughter, we do not mean that you ought to despise your Order. On the contrary, you should esteem it very highly, because it comes from God, it belongs to God, and it is really very good and holy. But what we are taught is, not to value it above others, which you certainly never would have done before it became your own Congregation. On the contrary, you used to esteem and value more those great Orders of St. Benedict and others, which have sent so many saints to paradise, which are so ancient, so approved, and which so abound in penitential exercises. The account you now make of your Order above others, therefore, proceeds, though without your perceiving it, from the too great esteem you have of yourself, and that is great, though hidden, pride."[1] And continuing in this style, she courageously repressed in her daughters that kind of pride, which is so natural, and yet so seldom a subject of self-reproach.

The rarest mortification finished in Mother de Chantal the work begun by humility. In obedience to her Rules she had, it is true, renounced the fasts, the vigils, the bloody disciplines, and the other corporal penances she had imposed upon herself whilst still in the world. But in renouncing *corporal* austerities, she did not renounce *austerity*. At the ceremony of foundation of the convent of Turin, the Marquis de Lullin called the attention of Madame Royale to the splendor of the Foundress of the Order. Her shoes had two or three patches in front, and they were tied with leathern strings. Her garments were old and patched. She loved them thus, provided they were very neat. She once begged the Sister in charge of the habits to allow her to continue wearing a veil that already numbered fourteen or fifteen patches. It was the same with her habits. She wore them till no longer fit for use. "I assure you," she wrote in one of her letters, "that for eight years I have been wearing the winter habit given me by our dear Sisters of Dijon, and I have never yet thought it not sufficiently warm. I hope, if God spares me, that it will last two or three winters more. Truly, it mortifies me to see religious vowed to poverty anxious about their clothing." When preparing for her last journey to France, she would not allow new habits to be made for her, and the day before she started she asked for some pieces to mend her habit, which was much worn. Up to the age of sixty she slept in the dormitory like the other Sisters, and when at that age Mother de Châtel insisted upon her occupying a room, she kept in it so little fire in winter that she could scarcely warm herself by it. When obliged to make use of a lamp, she would have only three threads of wick in it, or two when the cotton was rather coarse. She used to say: "I take great pleasure in looking at this little light, it savors so strongly of poverty." She wished to have nothing whatever in private, and she was often seen with clasped hands, her eyes full of tears, begging the Sisters to allow her the liberty of living in poverty and mortification.

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[1] *Réponses*, p. 488.

This same spirit appeared in her rigorous observance of Rule, her exactitude to silence, and her zeal in refusing self every kind of gratification. "All to grace, nothing to nature!" was one of her most frequent exclamations. One summer day, when the heat was excessive, as she was returning from the garden, she sat down on a flight of stone steps exposed to a cool, refreshing breeze. But no sooner did she perceive it than she arose quickly, saying: "Nature finds here too much to lay hold on." Another time, after a sleepless night, she happened to doze a little during the morning meditation. As soon as she became aware of it, she rose with holy ardor, and passed the rest of the time standing, "with a countenance so radiant and devout that she looked like an angel." Every instant witnessed some such acts, revelations inadequate, though eloquent, of the spirit of mortification that she retained to the end.

It is peculiar to the saints to reconcile in their conduct virtues apparently the most opposite. This austere woman was singularly kind, amiable, and cheerful. At the age of twenty she was named "The Perfect Lady," and it was a saying among the ladies and gentlemen of her circle at Bourbilly that there was no pleasure when Madame de Chantal was absent. Fifty years later the venerable Foundress, then entering upon her seventieth year, was still the life of the recreations in whatever convent she might happen to be. "Our holy Mother's presence was necessary for us to recreate heartily," says Mother de Chaugy, "and when she was absent from our recreations, the better part of our joy and satisfaction was wanting. Both beamed upon her countenance."[1] She was very fond of poetry, and there was much of it written in the Visitation. Mother Favre, Mother de Bréchard, and Mother de Châtel often, especially on feasts, presented her with canticles of their own composition, and she took great pleasure in hearing them sung. She frequently sang herself, and, to excite her daughters to holy joy, she at times wrote some verses or some little amusing nonsense, thus tempering the austerity of conventual life by her extraordinary amiability and cheerfulness.

But remarkable as was the union of so many different and apparently opposite virtues in one and the same soul, we may regard as something still more remarkable the way in which those virtues were successively developed and perfected. In this respect the saints do not resemble one another. There are some, like St. Augustine and St. Jerome, who devote themselves to virtue only after having squandered their youth in vanity and the indulgence of passion. There are others, like St. Teresa, who consecrate themselves to God at an early age, but who pause in their course, become careless for awhile (if we may venture so to say), and then resume with renewed energy their heavenward flight. Some, in fine, consecrated to God from the cradle, dispose in their heart at an early hour those mysterious *ascensions* spoken of in Holy Scripture. Their whole life, from childhood to old age, is an uninterrupted progress. St. Chantal belonged to these last. From a pious childhood she passed to a still more pious youth, and thence to so admirable a womanhood that the world thought she had attained perfection. But suddenly soaring from the ordinary to the perfect life, vivifying her soul by sacrifice, she began a new career whose every year was marked by progress. Even in those last years in which the soul seems to have naught to do but to reap and enjoy, she still sowed, she still labored, she still advanced. Take the monastic virtues, one by one, and mark her progress in them. "The older she grew," says Mother de Chaugy, "the more punctual she became in the observance of the Rules. She never dispensed herself from an inclination of the head, from a single ceremony, from attention to raise her habit when descending the stairs."[1] And again: "We may say that the weakness of old age only displayed with greater brilliancy the holy vigor of her intellect, heart, and love, so that, regardless of self, she recoiled before no enterprise in which she saw the will of God."[2] And again: "The more she advanced in age, the milder she became in her government."[3] "In her last years she appeared so extraordinarily meek, so perfect, so charming, that it seemed as if the heavenly qualities of sweetness and gentleness had completely annihilated the eminent force of her natural character and the burning ardor of her zeal."[4] Her progress in every virtue was so rapid and continuous that one who had not seen her for some months would be struck at it. "We must remark," says Mother de Chaugy, "that, on her return from her journeys, we used to notice in her a certain extraordinary increase in perfection, although, indeed, we always saw that this faithful spouse was continually advancing from virtue to virtue, that this true flower of Paradise never ceased to expand, since she was always in the presence of her Divine Sun."[1]

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[1] *Mémoires* of Mother de Chaugy, p. 431.

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[1] *Mémoires* of Mother de Chaugy, p. 425.

[2] *Ibid.* p. 355.

[3] *Ibid.* p. 414.

[4] *Ibid.* p. 247.

By keeping herself thus exposed to the rays of the Sun of Justice, she participated in His light and heat. Some gleams of the heavenly fire that consumed her heart shone upon her countenance, revealing her interior transformation. The last page of the *Mémoires* speaks only of that countenance, always meek, always recollected, always beaming, which no one could contemplate without emotion; that heavenly beauty which, lighting up the face of the saint, made the beholder tremble lest the lovely star was about to set. What we have already related of St. Francis de Sales, and what is recorded in almost all the lives of the saints, was repeated in the case of St. Chantal. A loveliness hitherto unknown suddenly clothed their features some time before death. Whether it was that their beautiful soul, half-freed from the body it had subdued, became, as it were, visible upon their countenance; or whether, mistress at last of the soul and no longer meeting resistance, grace allowed its splendor to shine forth, and begin even here below the mystery of the glorification of the body, we cannot say. But the fact remains the same.

We should never end this chapter were we to recount the praise, the admiration, the panegyrics that the increasing sanctity of St. Chantal drew from her contemporaries. We shall quote only two, celebrated among all others for holiness of life, unerring judgment, great light in heavenly things, and, above all, for their perfect knowledge of Mother de Chantal. We allude to St. Francis de Sales and St. Vincent de Paul. The former knew Madame de Chantal in her youth. He saw her a young widow at Dijon, surrounded by four baby children and mistress of a large fortune; even then he esteemed himself unworthy of the acquaintance of so holy a soul. He respectfully preserved all her letters, and made notes of them with his own hand, intending at some future day to write her life. Although he died long before St. Chantal, and did not, in consequence, witness the last twenty years of her life, the most beautiful, the most fruitful in wonderful works, yet he never exhausted his praise of her. She was in his eyes "the strong woman" of Holy Writ, another St. Paula, a St. Angela, a St. Catherine of Genoa. "I can truly say," he wrote, "that a soul can reach no higher perfection with the same supply of grace. I have never seen such purity of intention, such submission to obedience, such detachment from all things, such acquiescence to the will of God, or such fervor in prayer as in this good Mother. . . . I speak of this most holy soul but with veneration. A greater mind and deeper humility could not be found united. She has the simplicity and sincerity of a child with a solid and elevated judgment, a noble soul and a courage for holy enterprises beyond her sex. In a word, I never read Solomon's description of a perfect woman without thinking of Mother de Chantal."

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[1] *Mémoires* of Mother de Chaugy, p. 417.

Such praise from lips so sincere and so holy would have sufficed for the glory of Mother de Chantal; but God, who had provided the youth of His servant with a judge, a panegyrist worthy of her, would not deprive her old age of a similar honor. Having reached maturity of years and virtue, St. Chantal lost St. Francis de Sales and found St. Vincent de Paul. The first directed her for eighteen years, the second for twenty. The one saw the rising of this beautiful star; the other assisted at its setting and, not less enraptured, drew a picture of it that might be looked upon as exaggerated, did not the name of St. Vincent de Paul exclude such an idea. We give it here. We shall place it side by side with that drawn by St. Francis de Sales, and we shall admire the humble woman who merited to be so praised by such men.

"I, Vincent de Paul, most unworthy Superior-General of the Congregation of the Mission, certify that it is now about twenty years since I received from God the grace of acquaintance with the most worthy Mother de Chantal, the Foundress of the holy Order of the Visitation of Holy Mary. It pleased God that I should have with her frequent communication both by word and writing, as well on her first visit to Paris, about twenty years ago, as on others to that city made later, in all of which she honored me with her confidence by laying open to me the state of her soul. I certify that it has always appeared to me that she was perfect in all kinds of virtue; that she was, in particular, full of faith, though during her whole life tempted with thoughts against it; that she had great confidence in God and sovereign love for His divine goodness; that she possessed in a very eminent degree a mind just, prudent, cool, and strong; that humility, mortification, obedience, zeal for the sanctification of her holy Order and the salvation of the souls of the poor, were predominant in her; in a word, that I never remarked in her any imperfection, but a continued practice of every virtue; that, although she seemed to enjoy the interior peace and tranquillity which is the lot of souls that have attained so high a degree of virtue, she, nevertheless, suffered so intensely from spiritual troubles that she often told me, both by word and by letter, that her mind was so filled with all kinds of temptations and abominations that she was constantly forced to turn her attention from her own interior, not being able to endure the sight of her soul, which was so hideous as to seem to her a picture of hell; that, nevertheless, although she suffered in this way, she never lost her serenity of countenance, nor relaxed in the fidelity God required of her in the exercise of Christian and religious virtue, nor in her intense solicitude for her holy Order. Thence it comes that I esteem her one of the holiest souls I have ever known upon earth, and that she is now blessed in heaven. I doubt not that God will one day manifest her sanctity."

CHAPTER XVI.

DEATH OF ST. CHANTAL.—MADAME DE MONTMORENCY RECEIVES HER LAST SIGH.

1641.

France had given birth to St. Chantal, and France was destined to see her die. To receive her last breath, God had in readiness a heroic woman for whom He reserved, as the first recompense of her incomparable virtue, the honor of closing the eyes of our saint.

Madame, the Duchess de Montmorency, was descended from the ancient Roman family of Ursins. Niece of Pope Sixtus V., grandniece and godchild of Queen Marie de Médicis, of rare beauty and precocious virtue, she had married at the age of fourteen into the illustrious family of Montmorency, the oldest in France, allied to all the royal houses, whose battle-cry was: "God help the first Christian Baron!" Her husband, the young Duke Henry II. de Montmorency, bade fair to be one of the greatest warriors of the age that had seen Henry IV. die, and that was about to usher in a Condé and a Turenne. At seventeen he was Grand-Admiral of France and Governor of Languedoc. At twenty-five he defeated the Calvinists on sea and land, drove them from the Isle of Rhé, and dismantled their chief strongholds, to the great joy of the Pope and all Christendom. He had hardly reached thirty-three when he received from the hands of Louis XIII. the staff of Marshal of France. Let us place at his side (it was the year 1628) his young wife, as noted for her modesty as he for his bravery, boundless in her charity to the poor, and employing her immense wealth in alleviating the misery consequent on war, and we shall understand the enthusiasm that welcomed the youthful couple on the journey they then made through their province of Languedoc. It has been said that success turned the young Duke's head. But it has also been said, and with more truth, that in time of trouble the most difficult matter is, not to do one's duty, but to know it. The Duke believed that he would render a service to the King and to France by opposing Richelieu's increasing power; and having received into his province Gaston, Duke of Orléans, heir-presumptive to the crown, he undertook to grapple with the omnipotent Minister. He failed in his attempt. Taken prisoner in the battle of Castelnaudary; carried, covered with eighteen wounds, to the Parliament of Toulouse; and condemned to death in spite of the tears of the witnesses, of the soldiers, and even of the judges themselves, he walked to the scaffold with courage that forced cries of admiration from the beholders. The soldiers that assisted at his execution drank his blood and dipped into it their swords, as if possessing the virtue to communicate to them the courage of the heart whence it had flowed!

After this terrible execution, all around Richelieu trembled. In addition to her bitter grief for her husband, the young Duchess saw herself abandoned by every one. Some closed their doors and windows as she passed, through fear of being suspected of knowing her. Others, and these had been her greatest friends, calumniated her to the Minister, the better to prove to him that they had nothing in common with her. She was even reproached for her tears. An order was issued to arrest and conduct her under a heavy guard to the castle of Moulins. In this cruel abandonment, though in so great need of consolation, it occurred to her that, were the gentle Bishop of Geneva still alive, he would not have forsaken her. Learning that Mother de Chantal was in Lyons, she desired to see her on her way through that city, hoping to find in the daughter the consolation that the Father would not have denied. But Richelieu's implacable orders did not allow his prisoner to see Mother de Chantal. All that she could do was to send her lady of honor to present her respects to the venerable Foundress. She declared that she felt herself unworthy to converse with a saint or to receive any relief in her trouble, but she conjured her to remember her before God.

Mother de Chantal at once responded in a letter full of tenderness, earnestly recommending her to abandon herself to God, and assuring her that her misfortunes would prove so many rounds of the ladder by which to mount to great perfection.

This prediction was accomplished in her solitude, into which nothing entered to distract her from her sorrows. Alone with God and the memory of her dead husband, visited only by the Out-Sisters of the Visitation, who had become her almoners, for by them she distributed to the poor all that she had, the soul of Madame de Montmorency fructified under the influence of her bitter tears. When, at last, her prison doors were thrown open to her, she no longer craved for liberty. "Why should I go?" she said, "I live now but for God." She left, however, but only to enter a solitude still more austere. There was in her castle a dark room, lighted only by flambeaux, with no other ornament than a large ivory crucifix and a small miniature of the Duke de Montmorency. This was her habitual abode. Here she passed long hours, nay, entire days, praying, weeping, and pardoning. The Duke of Orléans, who had drawn her unfortunate husband into revolt, visited her. He was shocked at her pallor and charmed by her virtue. "She is a saint," he constantly repeated at court.

Finally, in 1634, deaf to the solicitations of the King, the Queen, and the Duke of Orléans, who begged her to return to Paris, and to the entreaties of her brother, the Duke di Bracciano, who wished her to live in Rome, she withdrew to the Visitation of Moulins, not to take the veil, for she had no such thought at the time, but as to an asylum in which she would see no more of the world, in which nothing could prevent her from consecrating herself to the contemplation of God and the tender remembrance of her husband. The unpublished *Mémoires* of the Visitation of Moulins weary not recounting the admirable life she there led, her simplicity, her humility, her respect for the Rules, her mortification, and her great liberality to the poor. Mother de Bréchard confided to her the instruction of the novices, and Mother de Chastelluz placed herself under her direction. We shall soon hear Mother de Chantal herself proclaiming her a true saint whom God Himself visibly conducted.

She still wept her husband's death, and she wept him all her life. Over ten years after his execution, her pale, wan face told of the still open wound. In 1642, when Louis XIII. and his court passed through Moulins, his first care was to send his respects to the Duchess de Montmorency. She expressed her astonishment that the King should still remember so unfortunate a woman. "But, Monsieur," she added, addressing the royal messenger, "when you tell His Majesty what I have begged you to say to him, forget not to tell him, also, what you have seen," and, raising the kerchief that covered her eyes, she allowed him to see her face emaciated and furrowed by tears. Cardinal de Richelieu, also, sent her his compliments. "Monsieur," she replied to the messenger, "tell your master that I am obliged to him for the honor he confers upon me, but tell him, likewise, that my tears have never ceased to flow."

Many years after, Louis XIV., with his mother, Anne of Austria, visited the Duchess. He left the humble cell she occupied filled with veneration for her. "You teach us, indeed, what God demands of us by your own contempt of life," remarked Anne of Austria to her. When leaving the convent, the Queen-Mother pointed to Louis XIV., still very young, and said: "There is no need of my asking you to pray for my son. You are closely enough related to him to feel an interest in all that concerns him."

What was most striking in the Duchess de Montmorency in the midst of her grandeur was her deep humility. Queen Christina of Sweden, the daughter of Gustavus Adolphus, could not conceal her admiration at it on the occasion of her visit to the convent. "Never," she used to say, "have I better understood the annihilation of the Gospel than in seeing Madame de Montmorency." Among the novices of the convent, there was constant emulation as to which should humble herself as much as Madame, the Duchess.[1]

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[1] *Mémoires inédits de la Fondation de Moulins,* folio.—*Histoire de la Vie de Henri II., Duc de Montmorency,* by Simon Ducros. Paris,

Such was the woman for whom God reserved the honor of closing St. Chantal's eyes. With the exception of a momentary meeting in 1635, these two great servants of God had never met; they knew each other only by letter. Madame de Montmorency, who was now forty-one years old, had decided, after nine years of widowhood, upon taking the religious habit. She earnestly desired to receive it from the hands of the holy Foundress, and she wrote letter after letter, urging her to come to Moulins. For Mother de Chantal to do so, appeared almost impossible. The Sisters of Annecy conjured Mother de Blonay not to give consent, and the latter was not more disposed than the Bishop of Geneva to allow her to go. The leading gentlemen of the town, moreover, declared that the saint, being now so advanced in years, might die out of Savoy, and then they would never be able to obtain her remains. They sent, therefore, a deputation to the Duke of Savoy, begging him to prohibit Mother de Chantal's leaving his dominions. But it had been decreed in the adorable designs of God that our saint should die in France, and, despite all opposition, at the very moment the journey was thought to be definitively hindered, the venerable Mother received the order to set out at once for Moulins.

The parting was sadder than ever before. Her last words to the Sisters have been handed down to us. They are brief and unconnected, like those farewell words that emotion utters and sobs interrupt.

"My dearest children, I conjure you all to live together in the love of our good Saviour, and to love one another cordially in Him. Let Him be the sacred bond of your affection. Honor one another, as our holy Rule says, as the temples of God. If you do this, my dear children, your union will be all divine. You will honor God in your Sisters and your Sisters in God. Live in union, that is to say, having but one heart and one soul in God. Pray for me, my dear children. I love you all. I know you all. It seems to me that I leave you in the grace of God. I beg

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1643, 4to.—*La Vie de Madame la Duchesse de Montmorency*, by Cotolendi. Paris, 1684, 12mo.

His goodness to keep you therein, and to give you His blessing. Never swerve from our holy observances. Adieu, my dear daughters! Adieu, once more, my dear daughters! I know not whether we shall ever meet again in this life. We must leave all to Divine Providence. If not in this world, it will be in a blessed eternity. I shall often see you in spirit, for you are ever really in my mind. I do not know what it means,—but I know them all so well. . . ."[1]

She was forced to pause, and embracing them all, she whispered into the ear of each a last word for her perfection. They noticed that on this occasion she did not weep, whereas, on former journeys, she had never left the convent without tears. One of the Sisters having said to her, "Mother, we shall never see each other again," she replied with a smile, "Yes, we shall, my daughter." "But," continued the Sister, "do ask it of Our Lord." "No," said our saint, "His will be done! We shall see each other again either in this life or in the other." To another, who expressed the same fear, she said: "Be assured that, living or dead, I shall return here." To M. Piotton, who was astonished at seeing her so cheerful on the eve of so long and dangerous a journey, she said: "You see, my dear brother, I want only the will of God; and if I knew that it was that I should drown myself, I would go at once and throw myself into the lake."

To the joy she felt in doing God's will by going into France was added another, which was very great, namely, that of seeing in Paris St. Vincent de Paul, whom she so highly esteemed, of conferring with him for the last time on the state of her soul, and of learning from that holy priest the art of dying well.

She left Annecy July 28, 1641. An immense crowd had gathered about the convent door, obstructing the way and filling up the street. She did then what she had never before done. She extended her hands right and left to all who wished to take them. The whole town had turned out to bid her farewell; the sick even had themselves carried to the windows to see her for the last time. "Alas!" says Mother de Chaugy, "little did we think that it was, indeed, to be the last time! Our worthy Mother was in such health and vigor as to make us hope for still fifteen years of life."[1]

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[1] *Chapitres inédits de Sainte Chantal,* 4to, p. 106. This manuscript is in the Visitation of Dijon.

She reached Moulins August 9, 1641, after having visited the Visitation of Rumilly, Belley, Montluel, and Lyons, diffusing everywhere an odor of sanctity, which made them say that never before had they witnessed the like in her. Madame de Montmorency received her with sentiments of joy and veneration that historians could not describe. There arose between these two souls, so worthy of comprehending each other, so close a union of heart that, according to St. Chantal's own testimony, they were thenceforth inseparable, indivisible.

On taking the veil, the Duchess determined to employ one part of her property in establishing a convent of the Visitation at Toulouse, to receive, as she said, the daughters of those that had slain her husband; the other was to be given to the Visitation of Moulins. But Mother de Chantal, now verging on eternity and dreading for her Order too great extension and too great riches, would not consent to either project. She exacted that the Duchess should return all her wealth to her own family. To this first act of self-denial she caused her to add a second. Having one day found her in tears over her husband's memory, she addressed to her but one word of resignation to the will of God. But that one word was so vigorous that it pierced her to the soul. Shutting herself up in her cell, she took her husband's miniature in her hand, that portrait so precious, for ten years watered with so many tears, and, after gazing upon it for some time, as if to intensify the bitterness of the sacrifice she was about to offer to God, she generously cast it into the fire. St. Chantal was struck with admiration when she heard of this heroic act, which she had not required. It was then that she declared that the Duchess needed not the direction of creatures, that she was a saint whom God Himself was evidently directing. It was on that occasion, also, to recompense the courage of the Duchess, that Mother de Chantal felt inspired to deprive herself of a little portrait of St. Francis de Sales, which she had received from the hand of the holy Bishop himself. She wrote on the back of it the following words: "My blessed Father, obtain for the Duchess the sovereign love of God to comfort and rejoice her kind heart in all her afflictions. *Amen. Amen.*" The Duchess accepted the gift with great pleasure, and kept it all her life as a double relic.[1]

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[1] *Mémoires*, p. 274.

Meanwhile the Queen, Anne of Austria, having heard of the venerable Mother de Chantal's arrival in Moulins, and being very anxious to see her, deputed a nobleman to request her to come to Paris as soon as possible. She sent a litter for her at the same time. When informed that she was approaching, she went out to meet her in her coach. Her two children, the Dauphin, afterward Louis XIV., and the Duke of Anjou, accompanied her. She welcomed our saint with great honor, and closeted herself with her, saying aloud: "I wish, Mother, to have a long interview with you for my own consolation and to ask your advice." She made her sit in an arm-chair by her side, kissed her hands, and showed her many other marks of respect. After the interview, the Queen presented her two children to the saint with these words: "Here are the two princes whom God has given me. You must pray earnestly for them and bless them," and, in spite of her reluctance, Mother de Chantal had to comply, the Queen making her sons kneel to receive her blessing.[2]

This took place at Saint-Germain, whence St. Chantal proceeded to Paris. There she met an enthusiastic reception. So numerous were those that desired to confer with her that she was obliged to rise at three in the morning, and even then she could not satisfy all. The Sisters were kept busy getting her to touch the rosaries brought from without. It was everywhere remarked that what had been hitherto so admired in our saint was but the aurora of her sanctity, that now it was at its meridian. In the midst of this ever-increasing concourse, when they proclaimed her a saint and sought to touch her as a sacred relic, her countenance never changed. It was always the same: modest, affable, glowing with love. On her features could be read the perfection of the fervor and humility that reigned in her holy soul. "As for me," said one of the Sisters, "I found so extraordinary consolation in seeing how this good Mother behaved with all kinds of persons, and in listening to the holy words that fell from her lips, that, had I been told to choose between fasting and taking the discipline every day for a year or renouncing a single opportunity of accompanying her to the parlor, I should without hesitation have chosen the daily fast and discipline. I can truly say that I generally left the parlor with more fervor, more desire for virtue than I did from prayer. Very often my eyes filled with tears on beholding the suavity of her noble words and actions. I say as much with regard to listening to her in our recreations, for I could have spent days and nights there without eating or drinking."[1]

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[1] *Mémoires originaux de la Vie de Feu N. V. M. Marie-Félicie des Ursins, douairière de Montmorency.* (Manuscript at Annecy.)

[2] Deposition of the Superioress of Moulins and of another religious,

In Paris, St. Chantal enjoyed what she had so long desired. She saw M. Vincent, as he was still called, and opened her heart to him for the last time. How charming the conversation of these two great souls must have been! St. Vincent de Paul was entering upon his sixty-fifth year; St. Chantal was close upon her sixty-ninth. Both were near the term of their mortal existence. Their works were flourishing around them and embalming the Church. Whilst our saint had been travelling, founding convents and restoring old cloisters to their primitive fervor, the holy man had built hospitals, instituted the Sisters of Charity, established the Priests of the Mission for the country, opened seminaries, and reformed the clergy. But these were the least of their works. The most beautiful, that which cost them the most, was the sanctification of their own soul. Purified by the penance of half a century, adorned with humility, transfigured by divine love, it shone regenerated upon their countenance. They could not look at each other without beholding the image of Jesus Christ, and their humility, whilst endeavoring to hide their own merit, gave greater lustre to the virtues each observed in the other. O blessed moment, in which two souls transformed in Christ meet at the close of their earthly course! Holy conversation, respectful and touching demeanor, outbursts of faith, hope, and charity,—who can pen them? Here ended all the interior troubles of St. Chantal! Here ended her nine years' agony! Almighty God permitted her to find peace in her conferences with St. Vincent de Paul and the holy Archbishop of Sens, Mgr. de Bellegarde, to whom she made a general review of her conscience. From that day till her death, three months later, her soul was flooded with consolation. She enjoyed upon the brink of the grave a foretaste of eternal beatitude.

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[1] *Mémoires inédits de la Mère Françoise-Hièronyme Favrot.* (Archives of Annecy.)

Before leaving Paris Mother de Chantal went to Port-Royal, to spend two days with Mother Angélique Arnauld, who, alas! even then under the influence of the obstinate enthusiast, M. de Saint-Cyran, was soon to fall into the proud follies of sectarianism. But she was as yet unconscious of her danger. She poured into the heart of the saint her lamentations over the state of the Church, without the latter, little occupied with the quarrels of rising Jansenism, ever dreaming of the abyss over which Port-Royal was then suspended.

She visited the Carmelites, also, in Paris, and there learned from the lips of a great servant of God, Sister Marguerite du Saint-Sacrement, daughter of Madame Acarie, that her death was near. "What say you, Mother?" quickly rejoined the saint. "O God! the good news!" And all day long she referred to it with the greatest joy.

She left Paris on the 11th of November. On taking leave of the community she said: "Adieu! Sisters, till eternity."

She stopped next at Melun, where a young postulant begged her to allow them to re-elect a Superioress who was finishing her sixth year of government. At this request our saint assumed an unusually serious countenance, the bright expression that charmed every beholder fled, and gazing upon a picture of St. Francis de Sales, her only answer was: "My daughter, I do, indeed, love that blessed one, but I love my Rules still better."[1]

At Montargis she again met the Archbishop of Sens, who had been expecting her, and she again laid open her beautiful soul to him. "It would be difficult for me," wrote that prelate, "to express in what sweetness and peace, what love for God, what conformity and desire of being united with Him, was this holy soul, who was breathing out to God her life like a pleasing holocaust." When about to take leave of the Archbishop, our saint drew him aside and said: "O Father, tell me once more in what state, in what disposition I ought to die, for I do not want to forget it."

At Nevers she was not at all well, but she paid no attention to her indisposition. "My daughters," she said to the Sisters who wanted to prevent her rising at five o'clock, "we must always will what God wills, and die whenever it shall please Him." Seeing their anxiety to wait upon her and procure her some comforts, she said: "No, no, let all that alone. Poverty, humility, and simplicity are our rules." They were then building the convent church, and the portal had been highly ornamented. "That is against poverty," said the saint, "and it gives me great pain." She was inclined to let them pull it down. "If there can be found any one willing to buy it," she said gaily, "you must sell it." She exacted that they should, at least, write to the whole Institute, that they had done wrong in this point, and beg them not to follow their example. As she was leaving the convent, the Superioress exclaimed: "O God! Mother, must I think that I shall see you no more in this world!" Our saint rebuked her seriously, telling her that she should serve God generously and submissively, and never set bounds to her renunciation.

The fatigue of travelling from Nevers to Moulins increased Mother de Chantal's indisposition. The Sisters noticed the change in her, and she herself, hardly returned, felt that God was calling her, and that she was to die.[2]

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[1] *Fondation inédite de Melun*, p. 512.

[2] In this account of the death of St. Chantal we have the following authorities: 1st, *Mémoires* of Mother de Chaugy; 2d, *Circulaire* of

On Saturday, December 7th, eve of the Immaculate Conception, though already very sick, she went to the refectory, where she knelt during collation and, her arms in the form of a cross, twice repeated these words: "*O Mater Dei, memento mei!*" Then she added in French: "O most holy Mother of God, by thy Immaculate Conception, remember to assist me at all times, but especially at the hour of my death!" Next day she rose at five with the community, but she had hardly reached the choir before she was seized with a chill. They wanted her to go to bed, but she said, "No, no. Let me have the happiness of receiving Holy Communion with the community. This is one of my special days, for to-day, thirty-one years ago, by the command of my blessed Father, I began, unworthy as I am of that grace, to communicate every day." After Holy Mass they were obliged to carry her to bed. The physician soon came, and declared her seriously ill. The Blessed Sacrament was exposed in the chapel, novenas were begun, Masses were said, and all the religious communities united in prayer for her recovery. Madame de Montmorency offered her own life in lieu of St. Chantal's, and several of the Sisters did the same. But God permitted that "the wings of this dove, about to take flight toward its eternal country, should be stronger to bear it to heaven than all the power employed to retain it on earth."[1]

The hour of death, so sublime even in lives the most ordinary, possesses in those of the saints incomparable beauty. Those lovely souls, that for years have endeavored to perform their least actions with all the purity and perfection possible, when approaching the grand act that is to crown all others seem to gather up all their strength to give it the highest excellence.

It was in this spirit that Mother de Chantal had been so happy in conferring about her conscience with St. Vincent de Paul, and that, although she had just left the Holy Table, her first thought on feeling that death had come was to ask

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Mother de Musy, Superioress of Moulins; 3d, *Mémoires originaux et Vie de Madame de Montmorency.*

[1] *Mémoires* of Mother de Chaugy, p. 282.

for Père de Lingendes, S. J., to whom, in the absence of her ordinary confessor, she desired to lay open her soul.

On the evening of the 11th she made a short review of conscience, as if to put the last touches to the beautiful work of her life. After her confession she begged the confessor of the community to write to all the convents and tell them that her last wish was, that they should be very faithful to their Rules.

On the morning of the 12th she received Holy Viaticum with extraordinary fervor. When she saw her Saviour approaching, she rose on her bed and, with great effort, on account of the oppression on her chest and the weakness to which fever had reduced her, said in a clear voice: "I firmly believe that my Saviour Jesus Christ is in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. I have always believed and confessed it. I adore Him therein and acknowledge Him for my God, my Creator, my Saviour, my Redeemer, who has redeemed me with His precious blood. I would willingly lay down my life for this belief, but I am not worthy to do so. I declare that I look for salvation from His mercy alone."

After Holy Communion she called the confessor and said to him aloud in presence of the community: "Father, whilst my mind is clear, I ask you with all my heart for the Holy Oils, begging you to give them to me at the proper time."

She suffered much all that day. Toward evening, they proposed that Holy Communion should be brought to her at midnight; for having received Viaticum that morning, she would be obliged to fast for the next day's Communion. But she refused through humility, as well as not to disturb the tranquillity of the night and monastic silence. As they urged her to receive Extreme Unction at least, for they feared she might die before morning, she said: "Not yet, not yet. I am strong enough to wait."

About two in the afternoon she sat up in bed and, with a serene countenance, steady eye, and firm voice, dictated her farewell and last instructions to the whole Institute. In this testament, written as she said upon her deathbed, she recommended obedience to the intentions of St. Francis de Sales, peace among the Sisters, union among the convents, very great fidelity to all the observances, sincerity of heart, simplicity and poverty of life, and holy charity. "This is all I can say to you," she added, "even at my last moment." She then begged all her daughters to regard Madame de Montmorency with great respect, holy reverence, and entire confidence. "She is a holy soul," she said, "whom God is directing according to His good pleasure, and to whom the whole Institute is under infinite obligations. She lives among our Sisters with greater humility, simplicity, and innocence than if she were a poor peasant. Nothing affects me more than the tenderness with which she weeps my departure. She thinks you will blame her for my death. But, my dear daughters, you know that Divine Providence has fixed the number of our days, and that they cannot be prolonged a quarter of an hour. This journey has been of great benefit to the houses we have visited and to the whole Order." She ended by commending herself to their charitable prayers, promising to obtain for them, through the intercession of their holy Founder, the spirit of humility, the only safeguard of the Institute.

When she had finished dictating this letter, it was copied out clearly, and she signed it. That done, she lay down again, remarking that her conscience was at rest and she had nothing more to say. It was December 12, 1641, the eve of her death.

Toward night the oppression increased, and for a moment she appeared to be sinking. But her mind was clear as ever. The Sisters around her bed wrote down with scrupulous care the last utterances of this great soul around whom already the shades of death had gathered, for whom the eternal day was about to dawn. "What is a religious," she murmured, "without the observance of her Rule?" Again: "All the happiness of this life lies in prayer." "Oh, how beautiful will to-morrow be!" At times, she opened her clear, bright eyes, and fixing them on Madame de Montmorency, who never left her side, and upon the Sisters weeping round her pillow, addressed to them some consoling words.

Not being able to sleep the whole of that last night of her life, she asked them to read to her St. Jerome's account of the death of St. Paula. She listened with close attention, several times repeating: "What are we? What are we? We are nothing but atoms compared with these great and holy religious." She asked them to read to her, also, the chapter relating to the death of St. Francis de Sales, in order to imitate him in death as in life. They then read to her a chapter of the Ninth Book of the *Love of God.* When they came to that passage in which the holy Bishop says: "If my mother or I—for it is all one—be sick, I ought to be indifferent in the goodness of God," she looked sweetly at Madame de Montmorency, whose tears were falling fast, and pressing her hand, said: "That is for you, Madame." A little after, when listening to St. Monica's death, as related by St. Augustine in his *Confessions*, and the saint saying among other things that she did not grieve at dying far away from her country, she said joyously: "And that is for me!"

As death approached, her heart, so tender and so brave, became more tender and more loving still, and words of incomparable beauty and elevation escaped her lips.

Morning dawned. Before the community rose she sent away the Sisters who were with her, and keeping only Madame de Montmorency, talked to her long about her religious vocation. She again conjured her not to enrich the convent, to make over all her property to her own family, and to give herself unreservedly to God. Then, feeling exhausted, she said: "Adieu! Madame. We must part. Think of me sometimes."

At about nine that morning she received Extreme Unction with full consciousness and charming fervor, responding herself to all the prayers. The ceremony over, the Sisters knelt down, and Père de Lingendes asked her to give them her blessing. At first she refused; but, constrained by obedience, she joined her hands and, raising her eyes to heaven, said: "My dear daughters, this is the last time I shall speak to you, since such is the will of God. I recommend to you with all my heart respect and obedience to your Superiors, regarding Our Lord in them. Be perfectly united with one another, but with a true union of heart." She repeated several times the words: "But with a union of heart, with a union of heart. . . ." "Live in great simplicity and observance, By that you will draw upon yourselves the blessing of God. I beg the Divine Mercy to grant it to all the daughters of the Visitation." Then, after blessing them, she added: "My daughters, make no account of the things of this passing life. Think often that you will one day be in the same state in which you now see me."

All were in tears. The saint herself was affected, and she spoke with great earnestness. Père de Lingendes, to put an end to a scene that was exhausting her, made a sign to the Sisters to withdraw. "We must, then, part," said Mother de Chantal, "we must bid a last farewell." All drew near to kiss her hand and, gazing upon each with maternal affection, she whispered a word of pious advice into her ear.

From that moment the dying saint spoke but of God. Her eyes turned constantly from the picture of Jesus Crucified to that of the Blessed Virgin, both of which were fastened to her bed-curtains. The Passion of Our Lord was read to her in French, and the Profession of Faith according to the Council of Trent. She declared her firm belief, and that she would give her life in support of it. She frequently repeated: "*Maria, Mater gratiæ*," etc. Whilst, at her own request, they were reciting the prayers for the commendation of the soul, "O God!" she exclaimed, "how beautiful are those prayers!" Then she asked to be left alone for awhile, but immediately recalling the confessor, she said to him: "O Father, how terrible are the judgments of God!" He asked her whether she was afraid of them. "No," was the answer, "but I assure you, the judgments of God are terrible." After that she lapsed into silence.

About five in the evening the community returned to recite once more the prayers of the dying. Our saint was very weak, and the physician had announced that only a few moments of life still remained. A Sister approached the bed and asked whether she was suffering. "Oh, yes!" she answered, "but what is that compared with the sufferings of Jesus for me!" Père de Lingendes said to her: "Mother, have you thought of God's goodness? It is so great that, as it was He who through love gave us our soul, so it is He, also, who through love comes to withdraw it." She trembled with joy as she replied: "Oh, how sweet is that thought!"

They then put a lighted candle into her left hand, and she took into her right a crucifix and the little bag that she always had around her neck. It contained her profession of faith, her vows written with her own blood, and St. Francis de Sales' last advice to her. Thus adorned, seated upon her bed, she followed the prayers for the commendation of the soul. When they were finished, she gasped a little. "Mother," said Père de Lingendes, "the great pains you are enduring are the cry that is made for the Bridegroom's coming. Behold, He is here! Will you not go forth to meet Him?" "Yes, Father," she answered, "I am going. Jesus! Jesus! Jesus!" and with these words she went to her God. It was half-past six, Friday evening, December 13, 1641.

Whilst Mother de Chantal was in her agony, some one asked her: "Do you not hope that your blessed Father, Francis de Sales, will come to meet you?" "Yes, certainly," she answered, "I depend upon it, for he promised me."

She was not deceived. At the moment she closed her eyes, St. Francis de Sales descended from heaven to meet her. He was the angel sent by God to receive her beautiful soul, and bear it to the celestial courts. And God ordained that a saint who had known and loved them both should witness their meeting. Let us hear his account of it.

"I have not the least doubt," wrote St. Vincent de Paul, "that God will one day manifest the sanctity of Mother de Chantal, as I learn that He has already done in several parts of the kingdom and in various ways. The following is one that happened to a person worthy of belief, who, I am sure, would rather die than utter a falsehood." He was speaking of himself.

"This person, having heard of the extreme illness of the deceased, knelt down to pray for her. The first thought that came to his mind was, to make an act of contrition for the sins she had committed and for those that she usually committed; whereupon there appeared to him a small luminous globe. It rose above the earth and went to join in the upper regions of the air another larger and still more luminous globe. Then the two, merged into one, rose still higher, and plunged into and mingled with another infinitely larger and brighter. An interior voice told him that the first globe was the soul of our deceased venerable Mother; the second, that of our blessed Father; and the third, the Divine Essence; that the soul of our venerable Mother was reunited to that of our blessed Father, and both to God, their Sovereign Origin.

"Moreover, this same person, who is a priest, saying Mass for our venerable Mother as soon as he heard of her blessed death, and being at the second *Memento*, made for the dead, thought that it would be well to pray for her; that, perhaps, she was in purgatory on account of some words she had uttered shortly before, and which seemed to touch upon venial sin. Whilst thinking thus, he beheld again the same vision, the same globes and their union. He felt interiorly convinced that she was happy and in no need of prayers. The priest was so impressed with this idea that he seemed to see her in that state whenever he thought of her.

"One reason," he adds, "why the truth of this vision might be doubted, is that this person thinks so highly of this blessed soul that he never reads her *Answers* without tears at the thought that God inspired her with what they contain; and that, consequently, this vision might be an effect of his own imagination. But what makes him esteem it a true vision is, that he is not accustomed to have visions, and he has never had but this one. In testimony of which, I have signed the present with my hand and sealed it with our seal."[1]

St. Francis de Sales coming to meet Mother de Chantal, and St. Vincent de Paul at the holy altar, present in rapture at their meeting! What an admirable crowning to the beautiful life we have been relating!

As soon as our saint breathed her last, Madame de Montmorency closed her eyes and kissed her feet, bedewing them with tears. She kissed, also, with deep respect the holy name of Jesus which the saint had herself engraven on her heart. All the Sisters did the same. They opened the little bag and read aloud in presence of her venerable remains the holy vows, professions of faith, prayers, and acts of thanksgiving, written and signed with her own blood, some in Dijon, upon the altar of Notre-Dame-d'Étang, others at Saint-Claude, at Annecy, Paris, and Lyons, memorials of God's grace in a privileged soul. Madame de Montmorency had the holy body embalmed, after which it was exposed for two days near the chapel grate. Crowds flocked to visit it, bringing chaplets and linen to be touched to it. Then the Duchess directed that it should be at once conveyed secretly to Annecy, where the holy Mother had said she wished to repose near the remains of her blessed Father.

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[1] Process of Canonization of St. Chantal. Letter of St. Vincent de Paul to the Daughters of the Visitation.

But to indemnify herself for the heroic sacrifice of the beloved remains, and to console the Sisters of Moulins, the Duchess retained the saint's heart. She had it inclosed in a large silver reliquary set with precious stones and supported by angels. It was placed on an altar in St. Chantal's room and close to the bed on which she died; for the room had been transformed into an oratory, and the bed carefully preserved. In this little sanctuary the pious Duchess spent long hours in prayer, often reverently kissing the bed, "upon which," as she was accustomed to say, "I have seen how the saints die."

This bed is still preserved, though not in the convent at Moulins, profaned by evil times, nor in the room in which our saint died, which is no longer a chapel. It is at Nevers, whither the Sisters of Moulins retired in our own days. They preserve it as a treasure. It is impossible to look unmoved at that little wooden bedstead with its straw bed, hard mattress, and coarse coverlets.

Every deathbed is sacred. But that which has received the last breath of a saint; which has heard the last acts of adoration, faith, humility, and contempt of earth, the greatest and most beautiful of all acts; upon which is consumed in the fire of love the holocaust of a life already immolated by penitential fervor; from which the soul, casting off the bonds of mortality, takes its flight to God, who is awaiting it,—such a couch is an altar. We approach it with respect, we retire from it with emotion. Nothing, perhaps, can more eloquently teach the soul how to live and how to die.

CHAPTER XVII.

CANONIZATION OF ST. CHANTAL.

St. Chantal's remains reached Annecy December 30, 1641. From Moulins to Lyons the officers of Madame de Montmorency, deputed to conduct the funeral cortége, had faithfully executed her orders. They had travelled rapidly and secretly. Lyons, in particular, had been traversed hastily, and by night. The two convents of the Visitation in that city little suspected that the body of their holy Foundress was passing their door. But once out of Lyons and some distance on their road to Savoy, the officers of the Duchess, thinking all danger past, began to travel more leisurely, and to allow their secret to escape. The journey became at once a triumph. At Montluel, the people ran in crowds to the chapel of the Visitation, and the Sisters spent the night in prayer around the precious shrine. At Belley, Bishop Camus, in pontifical robes and accompanied by his clergy, went out to meet it. He was preceded by music and followed by an immense crowd carrying flambeaux. At Saint-Lambert, Seissel, and Rumilly, the concourse of people was still greater. Everywhere the bells were rung and the churches draped in black. Whole towns and villages turned out, eager to salute for the last time the holy Foundress.

But nowhere was the crowd so dense, so enthusiastic as at Annecy. The body was solemnly borne into the church of the first convent of the Visitation, and the coffin opened to gratify the impatient and pious curiosity of the people. That very day a miracle bore testimony to Mother de Chantal's sanctity. Among those that crowded to kiss her feet was a young libertine whose scandalous life was notorious. On his attempting to press his lips to her feet, the saint withdrew them. The people saw it, and uttered a cry of exultation.[1]

After several days had been granted to public devotion, the body was deposited in the Sisters' choir. It could not be buried in the church at the time, on account of its being under repair; and shortly after, the holy remains were, for the same reason, transported to the sacristy, where they remained for nearly a year.[2] "Now," writes Mother de Chaugy, "it was truly remarkable that, the very instant the body entered the convent, our poor hearts, so oppressed with sorrow since the news of our loss that we could not look at each other with dry eyes, were all filled with interior joy and with so great certitude of the beatitude of the holy soul of her who was thus giving her remains back to us, that it dried our tears, and we could only say: 'Oh, she has gone before us to heaven! How happy we are to have such an advocate before God!'"[3]

The celebrated vision of St. Vincent de Paul, written out by the holy priest himself with the liveliest expressions of veneration for Mother de Chantal, was quickly spread through all the convents, and it contributed to dry the tears of her daughters. Another vision, related by Bishop de Maupas, produced a similar effect. He says: "After the death of Mother de Chantal, a soul of great virtue saw her kneeling in her usual form and dress, her face luminous, her arms crossed upon her breast, and in them a crucifix inclined a little toward the left. She was bowed, her eyes raised toward the glory into which she was about to enter. The person to whom this vision was vouchsafed, wondering what was supporting Mother de Chantal in that posture, received the reply: 'Her love and her desire.'"[4]

When the first anniversary of the holy Mother's death came round, Mother de Blonay would not allow any funereal symbols or decorations to be used at the solemn service celebrated for the deceased Foundress. She had the church draped in white and ornamented with flowers, and she begged His Lordship, Charles-Auguste de Sales, to preach upon the virtues of the saint, which he did most ably and willingly.[1]

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[1] *Procès de Béatification*, vol. ii. p. 309.

[2] *Inhumation et Sépulture de la Révérende Mère Jeanne-Françoise Frémyot, dite de Chantal, première Religieuse et Fondatrice de l'Ordre de la Visitation de Sainte-Marie.*—Register of the Bishopric of Geneva.

[3] *Mémoires*, p. 294.

[4] *Vie de la Vénérable Mère de Chantal*, p. 426.

Meanwhile, the repairs on the church had been finished, and the tomb prepared for the holy remains. But it was not till seven years later that everything was ready for their solemn translation. On December 11, 1648, Charles-Auguste de Sales, then Bishop of Annecy, entered the convent to certify to the authenticity of the body. It was shown him by Mother de Chaugy, the Superioress, and Mother de Blonay, and then borne processionally to the church in the midst of an immense crowd, and deposited in the chapel of Sainte-Lucie.[2] No inscription was placed on the marble tomb. It was ornamented merely with a sculptured representation of the venerable Foundress on her deathbed, surrounded by her religious.[3]

Many who justly regarded Mother de Chantal as the cornerstone of the Visitation thought that the Order, having no visible bond of union, subsisting, as they said, by the saint's immense ascendency alone, would be at once dissolved by her death. They even prophesied it publicly; but they were deceived, and it soon became evident that the spirit of the venerable Foundress had survived her and was dwelling in her spiritual children. She had scarcely closed her eyes before all the convents by a unanimous, though not concerted, movement sent messengers to Annecy, to renew and confirm their union with it. They declared that they would always look upon it as the holy source whence they had all issued, the centre to which they should always tend, the spot in which dwelt with their holy remains the plenitude of the spirit of their holy Founders. This solemn promise has been preserved inviolably for over two hundred years.

Whilst the interior life of the Order did not diminish, its exterior propagation was on the increase. St. Chantal had left eighty-six convents, and every year saw new ones springing up. At the end of the century there were one hundred and forty-six. There were Visitation houses not only in France, Switzerland, Savoy, Piedmont, Lorraine, and Italy, as during our saint's lifetime; but also in Sicily, the Netherlands, Bavaria, Austria, and even in Poland. In vain did the eighteenth century, by cooling faith and multiplying prejudices, check the development of nearly all Religious Orders. Nothing could arrest the progress of the Visitation. It spread into Spain, Portugal, and England. It penetrated even into Russia. It passed into Asia, and established itself on Mount Libanus. It thence winged its flight to America, to flourish in peace in the busiest cities of the United States.

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[1] *Vie de la Mère de Blonay*, chap. xv.

[2] Register of the Bishopric of Geneva.

[3] *Circulaire* of Mother Favre de Charmette.

St. Chantal's glory was propagated with her Institute. Every year fresh miracles attested her power with God. The most remarkable cures had been obtained through her intercession in Rumilly, Thonon, Mamers, Annecy, Saumur, Nevers, Pignerol, Saint-Amour, Orléans, La Roche, and Rome.[1] Unfortunately, in none of these places were the facts authentically collected; nowhere did the Bishops of the dioceses in which Mother de Chantal had lived, and which were full of her fame, think of instituting a verbal process or of commencing examinations that might one day serve for her canonization. Forty years had already elapsed since she had passed away. One by one, all who had known her most intimately, who could have afforded the most valuable information with regard to her virtues, had been allowed to die without being interrogated upon the subject. She who had labored so zealously for the immediate introduction of the holy Bishop of Geneva's canonization found no one to think of her own. The seventeenth century was drawing to a close, and it might have been said that the Visitation, though not forgetful of its holy Foundress, had little care for her glory, thought not of the honor of seeing her sacred relics upon our altars.

But this was not so. Not only in all the convents of the

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[1] *Histoire de Sainte Chantal*, by Père Beaufils.

Visitation was she proclaimed a saint and tenderly, though privately, honored as such; not only in Annecy, whither pilgrims flocked in crowds to her tomb, but everywhere, in France, in Italy, in Savoy, they were sighing for the day upon which they might raise altars in her honor. What, then, prevented the introduction of her canonization, especially in the presence of continual miracles, and a reputation for sanctity so generally and solidly established?

A singular error, which had recently gained ground among theologians and canonists, was the sole cause of this apparent indifference. In 1634, seven years prior to Mother de Chantal's death, Pope Urban VIII. had published relative to the beatification of saints a Decree which had been misunderstood. Jealous of the glory of the saints of God and inspired to take the severest precautions to place it beyond the power of controversy, Urban VIII. had ordained that, on the one hand, the people should no longer have the liberty to anticipate the sentence of the Church by rendering public homage to persons not yet beatified; and, on the other, that the Sacred Congregation of Rites should not in future enter upon any examination of the virtues and miracles of those that had died in the odor of sanctity until fifty years after their death. This wise prohibition laid upon the Congregation of Rites had been thought to regard Bishops also, and that, consequently, they had no power to take information or institute an examination in such cases before the end of the fifty years. This was a mistake; for who does not see that if, to commence juridical information, so great a lapse of time was to flow by, there might exist no ocular witness to depose upon the virtues of the servants of God; and that the principal proofs having disappeared, the process of canonization would become impossible? All this was understood, it is true; but as it was believed that the Decree of Urban VIII. was formal, it was obeyed, though not without regret, and the process of many servants of God was everywhere postponed.

This it was that prevented St. Chantal's most pious and zealous admirers from proceeding at once to a juridical investigation of her sanctity; but the fifty years had hardly elapsed when, throughout all the Visitation, prayers were commenced, letters exchanged, and initiatory steps taken, to obtain for the venerated Foundress the honor of being placed upon the altar. The formal investigation was not actually begun, however, until 1715, when it was opened at Annecy, under the direction of the Bishop of Geneva. The Commissioners went to Dijon, Autun, and Bourbilly, and, after visiting all parts of Burgundy, accompanied by the Count de Toulongeon, the saint's grandson, who bore all the expenses, they proceeded to Moulins, Bourges, Paris, in a word, wherever she had lived, in order to gather up recollections and attestations of her virtues. At the same time, persons of the highest distinction in the Catholic world were earnestly entreating the Holy See for her canonization. In the large and valuable collection of letters addressed to the Sovereign Pontiff on this subject are some from nearly all the crowned heads of Catholic Europe, from republics, from several Cardinals, and a very large number from Bishops, Generals of Religious Orders, Abbots, Universities, Parliaments, and municipal magistrates.[1] Not only France and Savoy, but Italy, Germany, Switzerland, Poland, and the Isle of Malta united in proclaiming the praises of Mother de Chantal and soliciting the favor of her canonization.

The procedures undertaken by the authority of the Ordinaries were finished in 1718, and forwarded to Rome the following year. But the Postulators of the cause had hardly submitted it to the Sacred Congregation of Rites when a great difficulty presented itself. It was the custom, except in the case of *homage immemorial* rendered to a holy person and in some other very rare cases, none of which applied to Mother de Chantal, to proceed to the canonization of a saint only on the deposition of ocular witnesses attesting to his virtues or his martyrdom. Now, in this case, owing to the error above stated, there were no depositions from ocular witnesses. The Apostolic Commissioners had vainly visited Savoy, Burgundy, France, and Italy. Everywhere they met the children of those that had known the saint, but her contemporaries had disappeared, with the exception of three or four old men, whose deposition, though valuable, was insufficient for the basis of a process of canonization.

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[1] Copies of all these letters may be seen at Annecy. In Dijon, there is a special collection of the letters addressed to the Pope by the most distinguished persons of Burgundy. Among them are found some from Louis-Henri de Bourbon, Prince de Condé, Governor of Burgundy, from President de Berbisey, the saint's relative, from the Parliament, the Exchequer, the Treasury, of Dijon, from the Mayor and Councilmen, from Bishop Zamet of Langres from the Canons of the Saint-Chapelle, etc. (Archives of the Visitation, Dijon.)

This very serious difficulty, to which no solution seemed possible, in addition to others, delayed the proceedings and even gave rise to grave fears as to the happy issue of the cause. Commenced in 1715, introduced at Rome in 1719, resumed in 1722, interrupted until 1737, it made no headway. The one hundredth anniversary of her death was approaching, and in spite of her heroic virtues, in spite of her most brilliant renown for sanctity, in spite of her numerous miracles, the saint lay in her tomb the victim of an error of theologians and canonists, deprived of the honor of public homage by the inexorable laws and customs of the Church upon the beatification of the saints.

In the midst of these fears and anxious anticipations, the Sisters of Annecy had a great joy, soon shared by the whole Institute. The investigation required the opening of Mother de Chantal's tomb and the authentication of her relics. On December 1, 1722, Mgr. de Rossillion de Bernex, Bishop of Geneva, accompanied by the Apostolic Commissioners, proceeded to the chapel of the first convent of the Visitation at Annecy, and there, in presence of Her Most Serene Highness, Princess Éléonor-Philippine of Hesse Rhinfelds Rotembourg, sister of Her Royal Highness, the Princess of Piedmont, and of all the Sisters of the community, who were standing behind their grate, commanded the tombstone to be removed.[1] They found therein a leaden case inclosed in a walnut coffin, upon which was inscribed:

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[1] These details are taken from a Circular addressed to the whole Order, January 12, 1729, by Mother Favre de Charmette, Superioress of the Visitation of Annecy.

HERE LIES THE BODY
OF OUR MOST HONORED SISTER JEANNE-FRANÇOISE FRÉMYOT,
FOUNDRESS OF THE DAUGHTERS OF THE VISITATION
OF HOLY MARY,
AND FIRST RELIGIOUS AMONG THEM;
WHO DIED AT THE CONVENT OF MOULINS,
THE THIRTEENTH OF DECEMBER, ONE THOUSAND SIX
HUNDRED AND FORTY-ONE,
AT SEVEN O'CLOCK IN THE EVENING, FEAST OF SAINT LUCY.

Notwithstanding the weight of their precious treasure, the Sisters would yield to no one the honor of bearing it. Assisted by their confessor, they raised it upon their shoulders and bore it to the Chapter-room.

There the Bishop of Geneva ordered the leaden case to be opened; "and then," writes Mother Favre de Charmette, "we saw our venerable Foundress clothed in our holy habit, the beads at her side, a crucifix on her breast. Her habit appeared uninjured, save the presence of some white spots caused by the dampness of the vault, which is over one of the canals of the lake. We saw on the head of the venerable servant of God the remains of a crown, which had not lost all its freshness. Nothing was out of order around her person. We recognized her by the original portrait that we have. The air of majesty and holiness that shone upon her face commanded our respect and veneration, and we silently returned thanks to God for making us the custodians of so precious a treasure. . . . Under the hands of the venerable servant of God we found a small box sealed in two places with red wax, and bearing the seal of the Visitation. On opening it, it was found to contain some papers that appeared to be those mentioned in the *Life* of the great servant of God, and of which it is said that she had asked to have them buried with her. They were so worn that it was impossible to decipher them."

After the Sisters had long venerated the remains of their holy Foundress, the Bishop requested them to retire. Then, with the clerical Commissioners and experts appointed by His Lordship, he proceeded to the canonical recognition of the relics, and prepared them for reinterment until the day upon which the Church would permit them to be placed on her altars. A new leaden case lined with white taffeta, and inclosed in a walnut coffin, was made, and the Sisters were allowed the honor and consolation of clothing their venerable Foundress in new religious garments. The stuff used on the occasion had been spun and dyed by themselves. All the garments were made by them, excepting the veil, which was the work of Her Most Serene Highness, the Princess.

The saint, having been entirely reclothed, her silver cross suspended from her neck by worsted braid, a crucifix in her hands, a crown on her head, was permitted by the Bishop to remain some time exposed for the veneration of the Sisters. No pen can describe their recollection, modesty, and holy joy as they knelt around their venerable Mother, asking her "to sustain them in fidelity to the holy instructions she had left them, in firmness and purity of faith, and in perfect submission to the Holy See." One regret was mingled with their joy. It was that all the members of the Institute were not present, and that, instead of once more committing them to the tomb, they could not all together bear the precious relics in triumph to the altar. They did, indeed, cherish the hope of being able to do so at some future day, but a long period was to elapse before its realization. Of all the Sisters that assisted at the ceremony we have just described, very few were destined to behold the dawning of the day for which they so ardently sighed.

The process of beatification did not progress. Years flowed by, diminishing hope, and increasing the old by giving rise to new difficulties. What was feared, at length arrived. The hundredth anniversary of St. Chantal's death came round (1741), without the Sisters of the Visitation having the happiness of seeing their venerable Foundress upon the altar, without the faithful being able to manifest publicly the veneration, confidence, and love that filled their heart. Still more, it was already being whispered about that, since measures so active had been fruitless during the past twenty-six years, it was to be feared that they would never be more successful.

Almighty God, however, had resolved to delay no longer the glorification of His servant. In 1740, the year immediately preceding the one hundredth anniversary of the saint, a man of profound learning ascended the pontifical throne. He had dived into every source of sacred science, and had especially directed his attention to the beatification and canonization of the saints. He was, at the time, writing upon this difficult subject a large and magnificent work of five folio volumes, a precious treasure of erudition and criticism. Having been successively Consultor of the Inquisition, Promoter of the Faith, Consistorial Advocate, Secretary of the Congregation of the Council, and Canonist of the Sacred Penitentiary, the immortal Cardinal Lambertini, who took the name of Benedict XIV., was, by his former offices as well as by his writings, admirably prepared to explain the difficulties then impeding the progress of canonization. He was hardly seated on the Chair of Peter before he summoned all the Causes already begun, St. Chantal's in particular, pushed on their examination, and, after long and earnest discussions, at which he himself presided, published, in 1751, the long-wished-for Decree of our saint's beatification. This Decree is a masterpiece. We give it entire, notwithstanding its length. In it we see the nature of those grand processes of canonization, of which the world knows so little; with what prudence, wisdom, and inflexible severity are conducted those proceedings whose result is to place humble Christians on our altars amid the merited applause of heaven and earth.[1]

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[1] The Decree bears the following title: Sanctissimi Domini Nostri Benedicti Papæ XIV. Decretum in Causâ Gebennen. Beatificationis et Canonisationis Ven. Servæ Dei Jo. Franciscæ Fremiot de Chantal Ordinis Monialium a Visitatione sanctæ Mariæ Nuncupatarum Fundatricis. Editum die XXI. Augusti, MDCCLI. Ex Typographia Reverendæ Cameræ Apostolicæ. It is a quarto of thirty-one pages. A French version of the Decree accompanied the Latin text. The former was distributed to all the assistants at the ceremony of beatification, and sent to the various convents of the Order. It is the one used in this work.

BENEDICT XIV.,

POPE.

Although the venerable servant of God, Jeanne-Françoise Frémyot de Chantal, died on the 13th of December, in the year 1641, and even in high repute for sanctity, as may be seen by testimonies to this effect left in writing by the most respectable authors of that time, who have likewise enlarged upon the great honors rendered her remains when, shortly after her death, they were conveyed with holy pomp from the city of Moulins to Annecy; the juridical investigation of her virtues and miracles was not, however, made at that time nor for many years after by the Ordinaries of the places in which it might have been made. This was either because it is easier to find people ready to advise what ought to be done than those that really put their hand to the work; or, perhaps, because an obstacle to this investigation was imagined to be found in the Decree of Urban VIII., Our predecessor of happy memory, published a short time previously to the death of the said servant of God, and by which it was forbidden to proceed to the beatification of the servants of God until fifty years after their death. The words of the said Decree are as follows: *His Holiness has expressly forbidden the Sacred Congregation of Rites to proceed in future with the process of the canonization or beatification of any servant of God, or the declaration of martyrdom, until fifty years from the day of his or her death.* This gave rise to a false notion, which led many to think that it was not permitted in that interval even to collect authentic proofs or to introduce proceedings concerning the martyrdom, virtues, or miracles of the servants of God who had died in the odor of sanctity; although this Sovereign Pontiff had no other object in view when framing such a law than to forbid proposing in the Congregation of Rites before the expiration of fifty years any doubt concerning the evidence of the said martyrdom, virtues, or miracles; but always leaving to whomsoever it belongs the right and faculty of instituting in the meantime proceedings in these matters when it shall be thought good, both such as depend upon the authority of the Ordinaries and those that are prescribed by the Holy See; without which it is evident that, after this lapse of time, there would be left no hope of having eye-witnesses to give testimony either in the process instituted by the Ordinary or that undertaken by the Holy See, and that there would scarcely be found a sufficient number of auricular witnesses to attest what they had heard from eye-witnesses. It is this point that We Ourselves have treated in Our work on the *Canonization of Saints*, in Bk. II., last chapter.

This error, almost universally spread, having caused a delay in the proceedings of the Ordinaries with regard to the virtues and miracles of the venerable servant of God, Jeanne-Françoise, until 1715, other necessary delays deferred, also, until July, 1719, the proposal of the ordinary doubt in the Congregation of Rites upon the introduction of this cause for the beatification and canonization, namely: *Whether the warrant for the introduction of this cause ought to be signed or not*, for it is only after such warrant has been signed by the Pope that the parties concerned may proceed to the execution of the Apostolic process.

When the Postulators began to speak of proposing such a process, however, We, who at that time exercised the functions of Promoter of the Faith, declared that the cause in question being one not based upon *cultus immemorabilis* or upon any other case excepted in the Decrees of Urban VIII., but upon the case known as *non-cultus*, and that, conformably to the custom observed in the Congregation of Rites (although not prescribed by any Canonical Law or Papal Decree), it was by eye-witnesses that, in such cases of *non-cultus*, the martyrdom or virtues had to be proved; the cause in question ran the risk of being forever silenced, and it was much to be feared that its introduction would be prevented through the failure of the Papal signature. Since the proceedings instituted by the authority of the Ordinaries, and seventy-four years after the death of the servant of God, presented no eye-witnesses to testify to her virtues, it was impossible to hope that such might be found who, in the Apostolic process, after the signing of the commission, could depose as to what they themselves had seen of the virtues of this servant of God.

But Cardinal Thomas Ferrari, of happy memory, one of the Cardinals forming the Congregation of Rites, whose advice was always dictated by consummate prudence and learning, who had attentively read all the important papers favoring the cause of the venerable servant of God, and who had maturely examined all its merits, answered that, on the contrary and justly, there nowhere appeared any express law that could prevent in causes founded on *non-cultus*, and in which preparation for the process had been deferred without fraud and for lawful reasons, the depositions of auricular witnesses as heard from eye-witnesses from being admitted as a sufficient proof of martyrdom or virtues, especially when such depositions are supported by the testimony of persons celebrated for piety, and by grave writers of the same century; that he was the more confident in his hope that this cause would one day come to a successful issue, since he saw it abundantly furnished with such proofs; that the Apostolic process could be lawfully introduced; and, therefore, he affirmed that he would not fear to give his vote for the signing of the commission. The advice of such a man had so much weight, even after death, that, notwithstanding the difficulties above set forth, and which We took care to uphold by word of mouth as well as by writing, it was followed by the greater part of the Cardinals that assisted at the ordinary congregation in which the doubt was discussed, and was confirmed by a higher sentence from Clement XI., Our predecessor of glorious memory, then reigning. That Sovereign Pontiff, extremely well versed in such matters, and to whom We, in quality of Promoter of the Faith, had reported all these things, signed with his own hand, on the 19th day of the same month of July, 1719, the commission for the introduction of this cause, as We have already related in Our work on the *Canonization of Saints*, Bk. III. Chap. III.

In consequence of these facts, and during the course of the following years, were issued all the Decrees and Decisions necessary for the progress of the cause, whether for the examination and approbation of the works and letters written by the venerable servant of God, or with regard to the observance of the Apostolic Decrees that forbid the rendering of premature homage to the servants of God, or, in fine, concerning the validity of the proceedings already enacted, first by the authority of the Ordinaries, and soon after by a special commission from the Holy See. When, in fine, in 1737, it was proposed to examine the most essential doubt upon the virtues of this servant of God, after all the time that had elapsed since 1719, the same difficulty that had formerly arisen was renewed, namely, that eye-witnesses were wanting to testify to the virtues, and that, without their assistance, they could not be proved in this cause, which was based upon *non-cultus.* But after referring to what had already long since been discussed, after examining the question in a Congregation of Rites, and after submitting it to the decision of Pope Clement XII., of happy memory, that Sovereign Pontiff issued, February 20th of the same year, 1737, a Decree by which he enjoined that, without stopping at such difficulties, the cause in question be proceeded with, as We have said in Our work on the *Canonization of Saints*, Bk. III. Chap. III.

After that, whilst these same virtues were under consideration, certain objections were brought up against the servant of God, which objections had already been presented and refuted in the cause of St. Vincent de Paul, the confessor and director of this venerable servant of God, Jeanne-Françoise. Meanwhile, We, though unworthy, being raised to the Sovereign Pontificate, decreed that an ordinary Congregation of Rites be held in Our presence on September 2, 1741. After having therein maturely examined the affair, We gave Our decision upon it a few days later, which decision was conformable to the unanimous sentiment of all who had assisted at the Congregation, and by which we pronounced: *That the objections proposed seemed to be no obstacle to proceeding to the examination of the virtues of the venerable servant of God, and that without stopping at those difficulties, it was necessary only to examine whether there was any other thing that might tarnish their lustre.* This Decree, issued by Us on the 10th of the same month and in the same year, is given at length, Book II., last chapter, No. 12, of the new edition of Our work on the *Canonization of Saints*, published in Padua. In consequence of this Decree, and conformably to what was prescribed in it after the sitting of the antepreparatory and the preparatory Congregations, a general one was finally held before Us, March 3, 1743. The ordinary doubt was examined, namely: *Whether it is evident that the theological virtues, Faith, Hope, and Charity, and the cardinal virtues, Prudence, Justice, Fortitude, and Temperance, along with those things that are connected with them, are found in an eminent degree in the case, and for the end in question.* Now, the opinion of the Consultors being favorable, We, from the knowledge We had derived from the perusal of all the papers connected with the cause, and after having carefully examined the representations of the Postulators, as well as those of the Promoter of the Faith, and having heard the inquiry made by the votes of the Consultors, which We caused to be presented and which We read attentively before the Congregation was held, no longer doubted that the heroicity of these virtues was fully proved and demonstrated. We deferred, however, publishing the opinion that We were bound to give, in order to take time to examine everything again and to implore, by Our own prayers and those of others, light from on high in an affair of so great importance. We had, in truth, found nothing that could have given rise to a doubt in Our mind as to the substance of the proof of the virtues of the venerable servant of God; but there remained something else to be examined for the form of the Decree that was to be issued.

On April 24, 1741, We had published Our Decree on the approbation of the heroic virtues of the venerable servant of God, Franciscus Caraccioli, Founder of the Congregation of Regular Clerks, called Minors, whose virtues had been proved not by ocular, but by auricular witnesses, who deposed according to what they had heard from ocular witnesses, whose depositions, however, were supported by many circumstantial evidences. It was on this account that We published on the same day another general Decree, in which We established certain principles and gave a rule suited to the subject by prescribing that, in the causes of the servants of God based on the case of *non-cultus*, and in which the martyrdom or the virtues could be proved only by auricular witnesses who deposed according to what they had heard from ocular witnesses, provided they had the necessary qualities, were supported by several circumstantial evidences, and that none of the points expressed in the Decree were wanting, they could proceed to the formal beatification of these servants of God, notwithstanding the want of direct proof; but that, for this purpose, instead of its being sufficient to prove two miracles, according to general law and custom, four would be necessary, and they should be fully stated by ocular witnesses, as may be seen in the Decrees of which We have spoken, either in the general or the special Decree, both quoted in Bk. III. Chap. III. No. 25 and following numbers, of Our work, the aforesaid Padua edition. There were not wanting, nevertheless, some who represented to Us that, in the case in question We could, after the approbation of the virtues of the venerable Jeanne-Françoise, permit the proof of two miracles to be sufficient in order to proceed to her beatification, although that of her virtues be supported only by auricular witnesses *a videntibus*, in consideration of the testimony of respectable persons who had been her contemporaries, of the number of whom were St. Francis de Sales and St. Vincent de Paul, and the same persons supported their representations by the Decrees of Urban VIII., which excepted from the rigor of the new laws the causes of the servants of God devotion to whom was founded upon time immemorial, or upon the *Writings of the Fathers of the Church and of holy personages*, adding that, if Francis de Sales and Vincent de Paul were not of the number of the first named, they were, undoubtedly, among the second. But We, knowing how difficult it is to direct and bring to a conclusion an opinion upon a case of this kind, except by right of *cultus*, founded upon the writings of the Fathers and other holy persons; considering several difficulties pointed out by Us in Bk. II. Chap. XIX. No. 5 and following numbers of *Canonization of Saints;* and, what is still more essential, reflecting that the cause in question had been commenced and continued up to the present by the way of *non-cultus*, were of opinion that it ought to be submitted to the law of the aforesaid general Decree, and that, consequently, no fewer than four miracles were necessary in order to proceed to the beatification of the servant of God. For this reason, in the Decree published by Us upon the approbation of the virtues, on the 31st of the same month of March, 1743, We made use of the following words: *That the aforesaid virtues were approved in such a manner that the discussion of the miracles in the case and for the end in question might be safely proceeded with; but that, as they were attested by auricular witnesses only, though supported in many ways, it would be necessary to supply by the proof of miracles what was wanting in proof of the virtues, and that the beatification could not be proceeded with until after four miracles had been approved, which should be stated by ocular witnesses, according to the form of the general Decree given upon this subject on the 23d of April, 1741.* This Decree may be found in Bk. IV. Chap. VI. Pt. I. No. 1, of Our work on the *Canonization of Saints*, Padua edition.

The examination of the virtues being over, and as it was necessary to proceed to that of the miracles wrought through the intercession of the same venerable servant of God, it was proposed to the Consultors of the Congregation of Sacred Rites, first in the ante-preparatory Congregation, held January 26, 1745; then in the other Congregation called preparatory, held September 6, 1746; again, in another similar Congregation, which, for the clearer unfolding of the truth, was held extraordinarily on July 11, 1748; and finally in the general Congregation, in which not only the Consultors, but also Our venerable brethren, the Cardinals, gave their votes, and which was held before Us, on the 13th of July, of the present year, 1751. In it the following doubt was proposed: *Whether it is evident, and of what miracles it is evident, in the case and for the end in question.*

Among the many miracles proposed for examination by the Postulators, and which were discussed in the said first Congregations, four cures were chosen, which the jury deputed to render a true verdict being sworn did not hesitate to recognize as miraculous. The following is the manner in which these four cures were wrought:

Gabrielle-Angélique Morel, who later on became a professed religious of the Visitation in the town of Avallon, diocese of Autun, had, from her birth till her fifteenth year, her right hip, thigh, leg, and foot one and a half inches shorter than her left hip, thigh, leg, and foot. During all that time she was seen by every one to limp very much, so that her body inclined entirely to the right. For this reason, she could not kneel a moment without a cushion, or some other support, under the right knee. Still less could she walk without the heel of her right shoe being much higher than that of the left, that thus she might be able to touch the ground with the tips of her toes. Besides this, her right leg was thinner than the left, less muscular, and less susceptible of heat. As she was born with this defect, no one sought or tried any remedy for it. The poor girl, who had already reached the age of fifteen, was exceedingly anxious to become a religious; but having been rejected by the Ursulines of the diocese of Langres, she feared meeting with a like refusal from the Visitandines of the said town of Avallon, with whom she was at the time, seeing that she was incapable of performing the duties of a religious. She had recourse to the venerable servant of God, Jeanne-Françoise, to whom she made a novena. During it her cure progressed so rapidly that, on the fourth day, she received Holy Communion kneeling. This position gave her no pain, as her body was balanced upon both knees, which had become perfectly equal. In fine, on the ninth and last day of the novena, her right leg and foot were of exactly the same length, fulness, strength, warmth, and feeling as her left leg and foot. No longer limping, she enjoyed the full use of her limbs, and from that time walked as well as if she had never been lame.

The second cure is that of Elizabeth Dromier de la Pérouse, a professed religious of the same Order of the Visitation, in the town of Saint-Amour, diocese of Lyons, who, from the eighth year of her age, being of a very delicate constitution, was often sick and almost worn out by a complication of diseases. Diarrhœa almost continual, cramps in the stomach, rheumatism, constant fever, and a violent cough had, at first, weakened her. After attaining the age of womanhood and making her religious vows, her fever increased, and she was so subject to vomiting that she not only ejected whatever she ate and drank, but sometimes clear blood. One rib of her left side, moreover, was observed to be dislocated and raised. After a long and useless trial of remedies, prescribed her by the physicians, she was given over by them, and for three months lay half-dead in her bed, so miserably weak that she not only lay on her back unable to move or sleep, but, moreover, she entirely lost her voice. Seeing herself near death, she invoked the servant of God, Jeanne de Chantal, and made to her a novena. On the last day of it, after receiving Holy Communion, she was delivered from her many sufferings. Feeling her health and strength return, she quickly left her bed and dressed. She returned thanks both in public and in private to her benefactress. She ate at the common table and performed all the duties, even the most laborious, appertaining to the religious life, and continued in the enjoyment of perfect health.

The third cure was that of Claire de Rossi, a native of Rome. As she never left her mother, who died a victim to pulmonary consumption, she took the disease. She was tormented by violent and constant fever, pains in the head, nausea, difficulty in breathing and lying on the right side, and an incessant and fatiguing cough, attended by expectorations of a yellow and purulent matter, sometimes mingled with blood. The violence of the cough broke abscesses filled with pus, which gave rise to the fear that she would be suffocated by the discharge. There could be no doubt that her consumption was daily increasing, judging from the extinction of voice, the cold sweat in which she was constantly bathed, and the general wasting away of her whole person. Her weakness was extreme. The curate of the parish, who had already administered to her all the sacraments of the Church, believed not only that she would very soon die, but that she was really dead. It was only after having recourse to the usual method of holding before her mouth a lighted candle, that he assured himself that she still breathed. Meanwhile, this girl, who had for nine months been given over by the doctors and who was upon the point of being borne to the tomb, invoked the venerable servant of God, making a novena to her, according to custom.

Between the third or fourth and the ninth day of the novena, the violence of her disease was entirely broken. Her fever, sweat, cough, sleeplessness, and purulent expectoration ceased. She so far recovered her color, appetite, and strength as to be able to leave the house perfectly cured in the sight of all.

The fourth miraculous cure occurred in the person of Eugénie Trochon, a professed religious of the aforesaid Order of the Visitation, in the town of Saumur, diocese of Anjou. Three years after adolescence, she was attacked by a slight daily fever and a convulsive cough. Later on, she contracted asthma in so violent a form, her breathing being so obstructed, that she would have died had she not during eight years obtained relief from frequent bleeding. The operation was often performed several times in the same day. Remedies were useless, and the vomiting caused by emetics, instead of relieving, only increased her sufferings; for the malignant humor that gave rise to them fell on her right side, bringing on a severe stroke of paralysis. This lasted several months, rendering her arm and leg perfectly useless and partly deprived of feeling. This religious passed forty days, at least, in this deplorable state, without making use of any remedy. Her debility was so great that her Sisters, when moving her from one place to another, used to tie her paralyzed limb to the other with a cord. Being reduced to such extremity, she implored the assistance of the venerable servant of God. On the last day of the novena she made to her, she arose, walked, knelt, and performed all the other actions of life, a thing she had not been able to do for a long time previously.

Before assembling the aforesaid general Congregation, at which it is Our custom to assist, We examined all the proofs of the process, all the writings of the Postulators, of the Promoter of the Faith, and the consultations of the jury. We heard the oral information afforded by various parties, and we read the votes given in writing by the Consultors. The said Congregation being, at last, convened, We heard the opinion of the Cardinals on the aforesaid cures, and, although the number of affirmative votes was sufficient to justify their approval as miraculous, nevertheless, We held it Our duty to suspend judgment, to the end that We might implore the assistance of the Father of light, to discover the truth more certainly, and to take measures that would leave nothing to be desired in the examination and discussion of the things thus far done.

In Our work on the *Canonization of Saints*, which We have already quoted several times, and which We shall again quote farther on, because We took special care to collect in it everything bearing upon the beatification of the servants of God and the canonization of the beatified as well as the opinion of the Holy See and the practice of the Congregation of Rites supported by the gravest authors, We have shown in Bk. IV. Pt. I. Chap. VIII., that no cure except that of a serious sickness can be regarded as miraculous, and that the matter of a miracle cannot consist in a slight illness that can be easily cured. It was this that roused some doubt in Our mind upon the fourth of the aforesaid miracles, there being question therein of a paralysis that had lasted only forty days in a complete degree.

Besides this, according to what We have proved in the same place in Our work, the gravity alone of the sickness is not a sufficient reason to consider the cure miraculous, unless it be accompanied by other concurrent circumstances. It is necessary, among other things, that the cure be instantaneous, and that the lost strength, also, be recovered instantaneously, without, however, excluding the moral instantaneity which substantiates itself when the cure of the sickness and the recovery of strength have occurred within the space of a few days, provided it be evident that a cure of this kind, in the manner in which it occurred and in the time in which it was wrought, was not the effect of nature or of art, and that it was obtained in the manner and time aforesaid, and only through the intercession of some servant of God. Upon this point, Chap. VIII. No. 17, Bk. IV. Pt. I. of Our work may be consulted. All these considerations gave rise in Our mind to other difficulties on the first and third of the cures above cited which, although happening during the novena made in honor of the servant of God, were effected by degrees and in several days.

In order, therefore, to be able to give in so grave a cause a decision free from error, as far as is possible for the human mind aided by God, We again interrogated the aforesaid jurors, who, being consulted to arrive at the truth, already believed that the four said cures were miraculous, and We proposed to them to examine in the first place whether having before their eyes the aforesaid rule, namely, that a slight illness cannot be the proper matter of a miracle, they believe that the sickness mentioned in the fourth of the said cures was sufficiently serious and difficult of cure for the end in question; and, in the second place, whether, laying aside all the conjectures and reasonings of their art of which their certificates upon the first and third of the said cures were full, and examining simply the nature of the sickness just as it appeared to the senses, and its duration, considering at the same time the omission of remedies in the first case and their uselessness in the second, they concluded that the said cures do, indeed, exceed the power of nature, although wrought, not in a mathematical, but in a moral instantaneity. We did not wish for an oral, but for a written, answer, and We assigned them suitable time to examine the question maturely. Besides this, convinced of the intelligence and knowledge of Our head physician, not only because he had long and with great commendation taught medicine in Our University of Bologna, but also on account of the experience he acquired by his practice of forty years and his successful treatment of all kinds of diseases, even the most dangerous, We submitted to him the said four cures for examination, directing an exact description of them to be given him; and, without communicating to him the opinion of the other experts, We enjoined upon him to give Us his own in writing. And all agreeing in the belief that the said four cures, if not in substance, at least in the manner and time in which they were wrought, exceed the powers of nature, the whole affair having been well examined, and having again invoked the assistance of Divine Light, We believed that there was no longer any reason to hesitate approving them as miraculous. By the tenor of the present Decree, therefore, We approve the four cures, and We permit and respectfully enjoin that they be published as miracles of the third degree, in conformity with the teachings of the Angelic Doctor, St. Thomas, Pt. I. Quæst. CV. Art. 8; and Bk. III. *Contra Gentiles*, Chap. CI., commonly followed by theologians and canonists, and to which the Congregation of Sacred Rites daily conforms in its decisions, as may be seen in our aforesaid work, Bk. IV. Pt. I. Chap. I. No. 6, *et seq.*

We have proved, also, in the same work, as well by the authorities as by the examples quoted in Bk. I. Chap. XXVI. No. 1, and Chap. XXXII. No. 3, and in Bk. IV. Pt. I. Chap. VI. No. 5, that miracles of the third degree are sufficient for the beatification of the servants of God and for the canonization of the beatified.

At the time that the aforesaid miracles proposed by the Postulators were being examined in the Congregation of Sacred Rites, We received a letter from Our venerable brother, the Bishop of Orléans, in which he informed Us that the almighty power of God had just worked another miracle through the intercession of the same servant of God, Jeanne-Françoise de Chantal, in the person of Our beloved child, Suzanne Bienfait, a professed religious in the convent of the Visitation of Holy Mary, in the city of Orléans, upon which the said Bishop caused a juridical process to be drawn up by the physicians and surgeons that had assisted at her cure, requiring an examination of the said religious, who had been a long time sick, and of the other religious of the convent who had been present at all that had taken place. He promised to send Us the said process, as, in fact, thanks to his care, We had it before Us in authentic form.

The fact set forth in this process and related by the aforesaid sworn witnesses, who all held it as miraculous, occurred in the following manner: Suzanne Bienfait, a professed religious of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, had had for three years a scirrhous tumor in the right side toward the liver, which appeared externally larger than a fist. Nine months before her cure, the tumor moved toward the left side, and hardly could it be touched without causing very severe pain. To this suffering were added headaches, sleeplessness, want of appetite, frequent vomiting, and pains in the intestines. To complete her sufferings, she was attacked by paralysis, which deprived her of all use of her lower limbs. She had no feeling in them. They had become so cold and stiff that lotions of boiling water neither diminished their numbness nor excited in them the least sensation. Her right limb especially had become so thin and withered that it looked like mere skin and bone. Her sufferings daily increasing, she passed two months without making use of any remedy. But having implored the assistance of the servant of God and made a novena to her, she entirely and instantaneously recovered her health on the ninth day, being relieved both of headache and colic. Her paralysis, also, disappeared. The leg that had been thin and withered became fleshy in an instant; and her strength being at once restored, she immediately began to observe all that the other healthy religious were accustomed to according to their Institute and manner of living. As to the continuation of her good health, there can be no doubt, for the Bishop himself, having visited her seventeen months after, found her well. The same fact was attested by the religious of the said convent, whom the Bishop did not fail to have examined for that purpose.

All the necessary requisites for a miracle concur in this fact, and they are proved undeniably by the uniform evidence of the witnesses who, as We have already said, were examined under oath. If the proofs of this miracle, therefore, be considered according to the natural rules of human faith, and even taking the matter abstractly, if a positive juridical proof is required, there seems to be nothing wanting to assure Us of its truth. But there is another reason that renders the said process entirely null and void, so that, did We hold to the rigor of the law, We ought to pay no attention to it.

The Bishops and other Ordinaries have, indeed, the power to undertake processes on the miracles wrought by God through the intercession of those saints already in the Canon and honored by the Church, just as they are allowed, also, to institute proceedings in the causes of servants of God not yet beatified or canonized, provided the Holy See has not yet taken the matter in hand with a view to their beatification or canonization. But when the process in question was drawn up, a long time had already elapsed since the Sovereign Pontiff signed the commission for the cause of the beatification of the servant of God, Jeanne-Françoise Frémyot de Chantal. Now, it is precisely by signing the commission that the Holy See takes the matter in hand, so that it is not lawful for any of the Ordinaries to interfere of his own right in the cause, or to institute proceedings upon the virtues or miracles. In case it happened that the said Ordinaries had instituted any such proceeding, it should be looked upon as null and void for the beatification and canonization, on account of the annulling Decree, which is, at least, virtually comprised in the signature of the Superior. We have examined these principles of law more at length in Our aforesaid work on the *Canonization of Saints*, Bk. II. Chap. I. and Chap. XXXV. No. 12, and Bk. IV. Pt. II. last chapter. We have shown that they are supported by canonical sanction, the Decrees of the Council of Trent, and the Constitutions and Rescripts of the Sovereign Pontiffs.

But as this process, very far from being instituted by Our venerable brother, the Bishop of Orléans, out of contempt of the Holy See, was done rather through respect for it, as appears from what We have just said, and, moreover, as all that is prescribed by the common law was exactly observed in it, We have willingly determined to dispense from the nullity arising from the fact that the Holy See had previously taken in hand the cause in question, and We ordain, by the plenitude of Our Apostolic power and by the present Decree, that it shall be no obstacle on this occasion. In consequence of which, We do not refuse to acknowledge the said process to be valid, in order to make use of it hereafter, conforming in this to the example set Us by Our predecessors who, for just reasons, made use of the same power, not only to dispense from such nullities, but also to consolidate other processes, as may be seen in Our aforesaid work on the *Canonization of Saints*, Bk. II. Chap. LIII. No. 8, where We have cited the example of Benedict XIII., Our predecessor, who dispensed from a similar nullity in the causes of St. Turribius and St. Juliana Falconieri. See, also, Chap. V. No. 12, and Chap. XXXVIII. No. 14, of Bk. II., in which we have related what the same Sovereign Pontiff did in the cause of St. Agnes of Monte-Pulciano, and elsewhere.

The said proceedings taken at Orléans having been acknowledged valid, as above, and having attentively perused the testimony of the witnesses and experts there examined, We have found that all the circumstances necessary for a genuine miracle, according to what we have taught in Our aforesaid work, Bk. IV. Pt. I. Chap. VIII. No. 2, *et seq.*, concurred in the cure of Sister Suzanne Bienfait. Therefore, after having heard Our beloved son, the Promoter of the Faith, and after having read his opinion given in writing, We approve the said cure as a miracle of the third degree. But We ordain that it shall be accounted as approved only in quality of *supernumerary*, that this example may not be abused in future for the purpose of proceeding to the beatification of some servant of God or to the canonizatian of one already beatified, upon miracles that have been established by processes instituted by the authority of Ordinaries alone, although afterward acknowledged valid by the Apostolic authority, that being contrary to what We have taught in Our aforesaid work, Bk. II. Chap. VI. No. 9. Finally, this approbation of miracles as *supernumerary* is not by any means new or unusual in question of miracles fully proved, to which, however, something is wanting that prevents their being regarded in the cause of the beatification or canonization. We have given an example of this kind of approbation in the cause of St. Stanislaus Kostka, Bk. II. Chap. XXVI. No. 8, of Our aforesaid work on the *Canonization of Saints.* It being necessary, in order to pass from the beatification of any servant of God to his canonization, that the Holy See approve two miracles, which must have been wrought after the right of *cultus* has been granted, among the miracles proposed for the canonization of the said Blessed Stanislaus, with the two that had been wrought after his beatification, another, which had occurred before, was proposed, and to which, consequently, no attention was paid in the Congregation in which the miracles were examined. But Pope Clement XI., Our predecessor, having maturely examined the proofs of this last miracle, and having found that all the requisite circumstances concurred therein; and as We were fulfilling at that time the functions of Promoter of the Faith, having heard Us on the subject and read Our opinion given in writing, in accordance with the command We had received from him, by the same Decree of November 13, 1714, in which he approved the other miracles that had been wrought after Blessed Stanislaus had been presented to the veneration of the faithful, he approved that, also, which had taken place before, but in quality of *supernumerary*, as may be seen by reading the entire Decree, which We have inserted in the place hereinbefore cited.

After having approved, as above, the four miracles necessary for the beatification of the servant of God, in the case in question, and of a fifth miracle in quality of *supernumerary*, it remained for Us to have proposed to the General Congregation of Sacred Rites, again assembled before Us, the following doubt: *Whether, taking into consideration the approval of the four miracles, we could safely proceed to the beatification of the servant of God.* But as the cause in question is one whose articles have been long under very close discussion, two extra Congregations having been held upon the chief difficulties touching the virtues and miracles, We believe it just and lawful to ordain and declare from this time forward that, in consideration of the approval of the virtues of the venerable servant of God, Jeanne-Françoise Frémyot de Chantal, Foundress of the Order of religious women called of the Visitation of Holy Mary, in a heroic degree, and in consideration of the miracles it has pleased God to work through her intercession, as above, the beatification of the same servant of God may be proceeded to without delay. Our venerable predecessors, the Sovereign Pontiffs, have left Us examples of this manner of proceeding, and We have already followed them in the cause of Blessed Jerome Emiliani, Founder of the Congregation of Regular Clerks of Somasque, in which, after having dispensed from the proposal of the aforesaid doubt to the General Congregation, We decreed that his beatification might be at once proceeded to, as is evident from the Decree that We issued upon this subject on August 5, 1747, and that will be inserted, as soon as possible, in Vol. V. of Our work on the

Canonization of Saints, Roman edition, now being diligently prepared.

It is, then, proper that, conformably to the wishes of the Christian people, the repeated entreaties of Catholic kings and princes, and the request of the venerable pastors of the Church, the Holy See grant, at last, the honors of beatification to this venerable servant of God, the Mother of a very edifying Order of religious women, who was a model of Christian perfection in the conjugal state, in the retirement of widowhood, in the sanctity of the religious state, and in the care required for the foundation and government of an Order; in whom the virtues peculiar to each of these four kinds of life shone in an equally heroic degree; whose holiness was declared by so excellent a master of perfection as St. Francis de Sales, who, after long communication with her, after having so long directed her conscience, did not fear to say in a letter, dated April 3, 1611 (see Paris edition, 1669), that she would appear before God as holy as St. Paula, St. Angela, and St. Catherine of Genoa. And since the venerable Jeanne-Françoise took so much care and trouble to obtain the canonization of St. Francis de Sales, as is seen in the History of her Life, very faithfully written by the Bishop of Puy, called Maupas du Tour, Chap. XVII. p. 360, and Chap. XIX. p. 381, it was very just, also, that this prediction of the holy Bishop should contribute to the beatification of the servant of God; in fact, there can be no doubt that the event justified this prediction, not only in view of the other juridical testimony collected upon the heroic virtues of the servant of God; but also from all that the same St. Francis de Sales has affirmed of them in several other places of his writings; in which he is fully seconded by the valuable testimony of St. Vincent de Paul. This testimony and these attestations ought not to have less weight in this case than in the cause of the beatification and canonization of St. Catherine Fieschi Adorni, commonly called St. Catherine of Genoa, in which much account was made of the praise she had received from this same St. Francis de Sales,as We have related in Our work on the *Canonization of Saints*, Bk. II. Chap. XXIV. No. 37.

If in the course of this Decree We have entered into a more detailed account than is usual of all that appertains to the cause, it was because Our beloved son, Pierre de Tencin, Cardinal-Priest of the Holy Roman Church, Archbishop of Lyons, and by Our concession and Apostolic dispensation Protector of the Order of the Religious of the Visitation, and Reporter of this cause, being absent from Rome, and We, having taken upon Ourselves to supply what he should have done as such, have thought it Our duty to set forth and publish the case called *Concordé*, containing the whole process of this cause; and, not having done it before, We have thought proper to put in the present Decree all that ought to have been related in this case called *Concordé.* As to the other things that ought to have passed through the hands of the Cardinal-Reporter of the cause, they have been attended to with great care and zeal by Our beloved son, Prosper Colonna de Sciarra, Cardinal-Deacon of the Holy Roman Church, commissioned by Us to that effect.

This Decree, dictated and signed with Our hand, this twenty-first day of August, the anniversary of Our coronation and of the birth of the aforesaid St. Francis de Sales, who was born on said day, in the year 1567 (as his nephew, Charles-Auguste de Sales, affirms in his Life of the saint, Bk. I. Chap. II.), after celebrating the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, we consigned to Our beloved son, the Secretary of the Congregation of Sacred Rites, to be preserved in the Acts of the same Congregation with the final consultations, held by Our Order, for the purpose of arriving at the truth, by the aforesaid experts upon the four miracles approved for the end of the beatification, as above; with the process instituted by the Bishop of Orléans upon the fifth miracle approved by Us as *supernumerary* in the aforesaid manner; and with the opinion of the Promoter of the Faith, required by Us upon the said miracle; and We have ordered that all be put together and carefully kept, that the remembrance of it be preserved to perpetuity.

The ceremony of St. Chantal's beatification took place at St. Peter's in Rome, November 21, 1751, with unusual magnificence. The saint's picture was placed in the centre of the brilliant glory that surmounts and crowns St. Peter's chair in the apse of the basilica. Two large paintings, one of St. Francis de Sales, the other of St. Vincent de Paul, were to the right and left, as if to declare the joy of the two holy men who, during their mortal life, had shared in the direction of her soul, and to whose testimony she owed in great measure the triumph then decreed her. Above the principal portal of the basilica was a large painting in water-colors representing the most celebrated miracle wrought by the saint, the cure of Claire de Rossi, which had taken place in Rome itself some years before. Early in the day, the popular enthusiasm manifested itself by the immense crowds that flocked to the basilica. The King of England, George II., a large number of princes, and the ambassadors of all the Catholic nations assisted at the ceremony. Cardinals, Prelates, and Generals of Religious Orders were present. At the end of the Mass, Benedict XIV., escorted by his court, came through the crowd, to pay his homage to this admirable woman, toward whom he entertained a most tender devotion.[1]

These honors were renewed throughout the Catholic world, in France, Savoy, Italy, Germany, and Poland, but nowhere with more pomp than in the cities in which there were convents of the Visitation. We should read the *Circulaires* of 1752 to form an idea of the joy and enthusiasm with which the beatification of St. Chantal was celebrated. Prayers, hymns, processions, symbols, paintings, poetry,—nothing could satisfy the desires of her daughters to render to their holy Mother the honor for which they had been so long sighing.

Soon after this event the French clergy met in a general assembly. On a unanimous motion, it was enthusiastically resolved to write to the Sovereign Pontiff and thank him, also to solicit the immediate canonization of the Blessed Mother de Chantal.

"Our wish might, at first, appear somewhat precipitate," they wrote to Benedict XIV., "but its motive and equity will justify our eagerness. Our petition is too lawful to be premature. . . ." They added: "The heroism of this illustrious woman, the brilliancy of her example, and the fame of her virtues are so great that the constant and unanimous prayer of the whole French nation for almost a century has been to witness her triumph. Before veneration was publicly decreed her, it already reigned in the depth of all hearts. Every day increased its fervor. At last, Most Holy Father, appeared under Your auspices, this devotion, so long impatient to shine forth. It triumphs throughout the land in the midst of the acclamations of the people. All that now remains for us to desire is, that the same hand that has so happily commenced the work will deign to crown it. . . . If the beatification of this venerable servant of God has excited among Christians piety so great, joy so apparent, what may we hope from a more august title, a more solemn homage, a more glorious name?"

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[1] Account of the Beatification of the venerable servant of God, Jeanne-Françoise Frémyot de Chantal, Foundress of the Order of the Visitation B.V.M., celebrated in Rome at the Vatican Basilica, November 21, 1751.

The Bishops concluded their letter in the following beautiful words: "We doubt not, Most Holy Father, that the unanimous suffrage of the whole Catholic world would be ready to support and second our petition. But for France there is a natural interest in the question, a right that ought to be to us very dear and precious. It was amongst us that was planted, it was amongst us that was cultivated, this blessed tree, which has spread its branches throughout the whole world, which offers so propitious a shelter to innocence and piety, and which never ceases to give to Jesus Christ and His Church the finest and sweetest fruits. Fellow-citizens, friends, relations of this illustrious woman—these are the titles by which we claim the honor due her. Love of country comes forward to crown love of religion."[1]

But whatever were the desires of Pope Benedict XIV., however great his zeal and activity, it was not given him to complete this work. Before the process of St. Chantal's canonization was finished, he had resigned his great soul to God. It was his successor, Clement XIII., who in 1767 had the happiness to publish the Bull and preside at the feast of the canonization of Blessed Mother de Chantal. The joy of Catholic hearts was still greater on this occasion than in 1751, the homage more ardent and enthusiastic. For a whole year the churches throughout the kingdom and all the convents of the Visitation were exultant with joy. With demonstrations of the most tender love, they saluted the holy and illustrious woman, now more than ever their glory and their support.

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[1] Letter of the French clergy to His Holiness, Pope Benedict XIV., petitioning for the canonization of Blessed Mother de Chantal.

This was, alas! the last joy of the Church of France. The horizon already bore signs of the storm then brewing over Catholic Europe, and which, a few years later, was to burst over the French Church, and lay its sanctuaries in ruins. The quiet province of Savoy was too near France not to suffer from its misfortunes. Before the twenty-third anniversary of St. Chantal's canonization, the religious of the first and the second convents of Annecy had been driven from their cloister by the Republican army of 1793, the Catholic clergy exiled or imprisoned, schismatic priests installed in the churches, and, consequently, set up as the custodians of the holy remains of St. Francis de Sales and St. Chantal. What was to become of those precious relics at an epoch in which the churches of France were plundered, and the bones of our apostles, martyrs, and virgins thrown out upon the public highway? Four pious citizens of Annecy, whose names deserve to be handed down to posterity, MM. Burquier, Amblet, Rochette, and Balleydier, determined to rescue the holy relics from the profanation awaiting them. During the night they exhumed the bodies of two religious belonging to the poor Clares, and substituted them for the remains of St. Francis de Sales and St. Chantal. They performed their difficult task so skilfully that the schismatic priests perceived no change in the shrines which they knew to be Annecy's greatest treasure.[1] The remains of the saints were in this way saved from profanation, and, during the troublous times, preserved under the flooring in M. Amblet's house.

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[1] *Relation de la Translation des Reliques de Saint François de Sales et de Sainte Chantal.* Annecy, Burdet, 1826.

The two blessed hearts were not less miraculously protected. That of St. Francis de Sales was in Lyons; that of St. Chantal in Moulins. After the death of St. Francis de Sales, when his holy body was about being removed to Annecy, it was found necessary to leave his heart in Lyons; otherwise, the Lyonese would not have consented to resign their treasure. The same happened at Moulins after the death of the holy Foundress. The Sisters of Paris claimed her heart, and justly, since the saint had bequeathed it to them. But the Duchess de Montmorency took active measures to retain the treasure in Moulins. She applied to royal authority, and succeeded. The Bishop of Autun himself wrote quite a chivalrous letter on the occasion, declaring that such a relic was well worth a battle, and that he would lose his life at the convent door rather than permit any one soever to carry off the heart of the holy Foundress.[1]

When the Revolution broke out, the Sisters of Lyons took refuge in Venice, where, protected by the liberty of that little republic, they again formed their community and built a chapel in which they placed under a canopy and inclosed in a crystal reliquary set with precious stones the heart of St. Francis de Sales. The Sisters of Moulins, dispersed awhile by the same storm, soon united again at Charité-sur-Loire, whence they removed to Nevers, carrying with them the heart of their holy Foundress inclosed in a crystal reliquary mounted in gold.

Venice and Nevers, therefore, possess to-day these two immortal relics. Time has desiccated the bodies of the two saints; but, we may say, it has had no power over their hearts. After a lapse of two centuries, they still seem to be susceptible of feeling. From that of St. Francis de Sales, that heart so sweet, so kind, so compassionate, there issues a fragrant oil, which is reverently preserved, and which relieves suffering, especially that of the soul. As to St. Chantal's heart, God has honored it in another way. That heart, which loved so much and suffered so much, which beat for things so great, which was crushed by sorrows so bitter, the heart of a woman so resolute and so tender, swells at times like a heart under the pressure of sorrow. On the eve of the great crises that have desolated the Church, it has been seen to expand and swell like a heart about to burst into groans.[1] Holy and immortal relics, may you ever remain in the convents that now possess you! May you diffuse over France and Italy, over the world and over the Church, the fragrance and light with which you were ever filled!

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[1] His letter shows that the heart of a knight beat 'neath the robe of a bishop. It runs as follows: "Madame, the interest I feel in the question of retaining Mother de Chantal's heart in your house obliges me to assure you that, unless prevented by an order from the King, I would go with all my friends and die at your door rather than suffer it to be taken away. It is a deposit well worthy of a battle to secure it." (*Vie de Madame de Montmorency*, p. 188.)

Meanwhile, the faithful were dissatisfied at seeing the remains of the two holy Founders separated and in different churches. On September 29, 1804, Bishop de Merinville, former Bishop of Dijon, but then the incumbent of Chambéry and Geneva, identified the relics, and two years later his successor, Bishop de Sales, having, on May 26, 1806, assured himself of their incontestable authenticity, allowed them to be exposed to the veneration of the faithful, that of St. Francis de Sales in the Cathedral of Annecy, and that of St. Chantal in the church of St. Maurice. This was something effected, but it was not enough. Eighteen years later, the first convent of the Visitation was re-established through the care of Mgr. de Thiollaz, Bishop of Annecy, and the chapel built through the munificence of Marie-Christine, Queen of Sardinia. It seemed proper that the remains of the Founders should be restored to their daughters. They were, therefore, in presence of the King and the Queen, nine Archbishops and Bishops, over five hundred ecclesiastics, and an immense crowd of people, solemnly translated to the chapel of the Visitation. The body of St. Francis de Sales was placed on the high altar, and that of St. Chantal in the first chapel to the right, contiguous to the Sisters' choir and communicating with it by a little grate.

And there, in splendid shrines, pious gifts of the Kings of Sardinia, on a couch of velvet and gold, and under a glass, which does not hide them from the pilgrim's gaze, still lie intact and as if asleep, those two great saints, too closely united in life for the devotion of the faithful to suffer them to be separated in the tomb.

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[1] See Note III. Vol. II. The convent of Nevers possesses not only the heart, but also the eyes of the holy Foundress.

Ah, may it be ever thus! May St. Chantal's body, that body sanctified by penance, labor, and sacrifice, worn out in great works for God, ever repose near the consecrated remains of St. Francis de Sales in the humble chapel of the Visitation at Annecy!

May the Revolution that is now making its round of the world, bearing aloft everywhere its bloody standard, respect those precious bones! And never, O my God, never may sacrilegious hands profane those sacred tombs!

But if that sorrow must be added to so many others, may, at least, the twofold spirit of this great Bishop and this heroic woman ever dwell among us! May it inspire us with fortitude, generosity, and devotedness, with virtues great as our misfortunes! May it continue to raise up valiant souls who, in the midst of the general relaxation of courage and degradation of morals, amid the universal dissolution of noble principles, may still present to our admiring gaze a shadow, at least, of what the language of Holy Writ aptly denominates A STRONG WOMAN!

APPENDIX.

NOTES AND VOUCHERS

FOR VOLUME II.

NOTE I.

St. Chantal's Relations with Mother Angélique Arnauld and the Abbé of Saint-Cyran.

(*See page* 69.)

To be able to treat this matter more leisurely and thoroughly, we have waited till now to examine the relations of St. Chantal with Mother Angélique Arnauld and the Abbé of Saint-Cyran, at the period in which the former was inclining toward Jansenism, and the latter, unmasking more than ever before, drew upon himself the restless eye of Richelieu and imprisonment in Vincennes. These relations, and, above all, the nine letters said to have been addressed by St. Chantal to Mother Angélique, from 1636 to 1641, occupied much of the attention of the Commissioners of the process of St. Chantal's beatification. Long and contradictory discussions, which lasted several months and filled more than one hundred folio pages in the Acts of the process, were the result. Having had this paper [1] in our hands, we believe it a duty, in honor of our saint and for the sake of truth, to clear up an interesting and hitherto very obscure question, by summarizing the discussions, upon the termination of which the Decree, approved by Clement XII., March 6, 1735, was issued to proceed with the case.

The Jansenists have made much ado about St. Chantal's relations with Mother Marie-Angélique and the Abbé of Saint-Cyran. They have insinuated in innumerable ways that St. Chantal had unlimited confidence in Mother Angélique and the Abbé, and that, in reality, she shared their principles. In support of these vagaries, they have produced nine letters that she wrote to Mother Marie-Angélique, from 1636 to 1641, and a note to the Abbé of Saint-Cyran, October 28, 1641.

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[1] It bears the title: *Recueil des Difficultés arrivées dans la Poursuite de la Béatification de notre Sainte Mère de Chantal.*

We must, then, show, as did the Postulators in the cause of her beatification, that, even admitting the perfect authenticity of said letters, the only proofs the Jansenists have ever produced, there is nothing in them to justify a conclusion against the opinions and virtues of the venerable Mother de Chantal. We shall next see what is to be thought of the authenticity of these letters, evidently fabricated or falsified by the Jansenists to serve their own cause.

First, with regard to the Abbé of Saint-Cyran, it is very far from true that he was St. Chantal's director. He himself acknowledges that he wrote her but one note, October 21, 1641; that he had never seen her; that he was ignorant of the nature of her interior trials; that it had not pleased God to allow him to be her consoler; that it was only at Mother Marie-Angélique's solicitation, and by no means at the request of the venerable servant of God, that he wrote her that one note when she was in Paris some weeks before her death.

Mother de Chantal, also, as her adversaries acknowledge, wrote but once to the Abbé of Saint-Cyran, under date of October 28, 1641, some days after that ascribed to the Abbé. It suffices to read the note to be convinced that no intimacy existed between the respective writers. We see that Mother de Chantal wrote to the Abbé of Saint-Cyran at Mother Marie-Angélique's solicitation only; that she thanks him politely, but coldly, for his prayers. She enters into no particulars about her interior troubles; she asks of him no advice. She addresses him as *Monsieur*, and not *Father*, as was her custom toward priests in whom she felt confidence. In short, the note in question is merely a few polite lines, offering condolence to a stranger in affliction.

It is true that, in her letters to Mother Angélique, St. Chantal speaks in very different terms of the Abbé of Saint-Cyran. She earnestly commends herself to his prayers and manifests many proofs of esteem for him, and this in 1640, when he was already under imprisonment. The most general opinion, however, as to the cause of his imprisonment was, that political reasons had led to it. It was, they said, for not having subscribed to the dissolution of the marriage between Louis XIII.'s brother Gaston, Duke of Orléans, and Princess Marguerite of Lorraine, a marriage which Richelieu caused to be declared null by the Parliament of Paris, in 1634, and afterward by the clergy of France, in 1635, with the view of marrying that Prince to the Duchess d'Aiguillon, his own (the Cardinal's) niece. It was said, also, that Saint-Cyran's imprisonment was owing to his refusal of a bishopric offered him by Richelieu for the purpose of buying him over to his views; for it was rumored that the Cardinal designed establishing in France a Patriarchate subject to his own influence, and by means of which he could have greatly molested Pope Urban VIII. Whether true or false, these rumors were then afloat, and the *Mémoires* of the time are full of them. The circumstances attending this imprisonment, moreover, were not of a nature to attach suspicion to the Abbé in matters of religion, for it was the secular power that had proceeded against him, a tribunal incompetent in matters of faith. He was imprisoned in Vincennes, a royal fortress for state prisoners, as Moreri remarks. It is easy to understand, therefore, how St. Chantal may have been deceived on the subject of his arrest, as were so many of the bishops of France and other pious persons.

But, it is argued, St. Vincent de Paul knew the Abbé of Saint-Cyran perfectly. He had unmasked him, and it appears that the testimony of that holy priest contributed not a little to his arrest. How, then, admit that St. Vincent de Paul, so intimately acquainted with St. Chantal, who so long directed her conscience, would not have warned her against Saint-Cyran? He would, undoubtedly, have done so, had there been between the sectary and Mother de Chantal any relations dangerous to the latter; but as they had never even seen each other, had corresponded but once, and as, at the very time of exchanging notes, St. Chantal was in Paris making a retreat and a general confession to St. Vincent de Paul, the latter deemed such a warning unnecessary. Besides, St. Vincent de Paul was far from despairing of the Abbé of Saint-Cyran. Even after his release from prison, St. Vincent used to visit him, and, as he died with the succors of the Church, the saint with several bishops assisted at his obsequies. Long after St. Chantal's death even, the Abbé still bore an excellent reputation. It was only in 1656 that the clergy of France in a general assembly directed the eulogy pronounced over him by the reverend gentlemen of Sainte-Marthe to be recalled, which proves that previously to the above-mentioned date neither was his teaching publicly regarded as suspicious nor his reputation blemished. It can thence be understood how St. Chantal, who died in 1641, may have had no suspicion of the dangerous doctrines held by the Abbé of Saint-Cyran, a man so skilful in dissimulation, and who led into error so many devout persons with whom he had daily communication.

So much for the relations of St. Chantal with the Abbé of Saint-Cyran. As to Mother Marie-Angélique, it is still easier to prove that our saint never dreamed that the young Abbess was suspected of error. Younger than St. Chantal by nineteen years, Mother Angélique did not die till August 6, 1661, twenty years after our saint's death; and it was chiefly during the last years of her life that she openly assumed the position of a sectary. Up to that period she had been looked upon as a person of very remarkable virtue and merit. Not only did Urban VIII., in 1627, in a Brief, which was afterward published, lavish commendation on her and praise her zeal, experience, capacity, and uncommon piety; but even in 1646, five years after St. Chantal's death, Innocent X. issued a Bull, dated the second year of his Pontificate, in which he granted to her abbey very great spiritual privileges. This proves that her religious opinions at that time had not yet awakened suspicion. And, even supposing that they were deceived in Rome, it is to be borne in mind that Mother Marie-Angélique was not less esteemed by the whole French clergy. In fact, not only did the Archbishop of Paris give the *exequatur* to the Brief sent by Innocent X., but, in 1656, fifteen years after St. Chantal's death, the clergy of France approved the first volume of the *Gallia Christiana*, which contained a magnificent eulogium of Mother Marie-Angélique, exacting no retrenchment as they had done in that referring to the Abbé of Saint-Cyran.

The venerable servant of God, then, neither could nor, under the circumstances, ought she to have harbored evil thoughts of the religious of Port-Royal; nor should she have avoided communication with them. She had, on the contrary, good reasons for loving them, especially Mother Marie-Angélique, with whom she had had intercourse so intimate and so holy. Consequently, if we sum up the first part of this note by admitting the perfect authenticity of the lines exchanged between St. Chantal and the Abbé of Saint-Cyran and of the nine letters addressed by the former to Mother Marie-Angélique, nothing can be thence deduced against the opinions or virtues of the venerable servant of God. But we hasten to add that the perfect authenticity of these notes and letters is far from being demonstrated, and that, on the contrary, there are very grave reasons to consider them documents either fabricated or falsified.

These letters, in fact, appeared for the first time in a collection published in 1645 under the name of the Abbé of Saint-Cyran, by Robert Arnauld d'Andilly, known as one of the most obstinate defenders of the errors of Jansenius. This of itself would suffice to cast suspicion upon their authenticity. The collection, moreover, appeared in 1645, soon after the condemnation of Jansenius (1642), and with the scarcely dissimulated view of shielding his friend Saint-Cyran with the authority and sympathy of a number of persons eminent for virtue. As soon as these letters appeared, there arose on all sides doubts of their authenticity. Robert Arnauld d'Andilly was summoned to produce the originals, which he expressly promised to do, but which he never did. After his death, his friends put an end to the matter by declaring them lost. The originals of St. Chantal's nine letters, especially, could never be found. The careful search everywhere made for them in 1737, by order of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, led to no result.

It must be acknowledged, however, that these nine letters, which appeared in a Jansenistic collection in 1645, are found at the end of the short Life of the Venerable Mother de Chantal (*Vie abrégée*) written by Bussy-Rabutin. This fact induces the belief that they are not fictitious,it being improbable that he would have consented to insert false letters at the close of his collection. But it must be remarked that they are not found in the first edition printed at Paris, in 1698, after the Count de Rabutin's death. From this it is evident that the origin of said letters is decidedly suspicious. Let us add that the Order of the Visitation has never acknowledged them. They had hardly appeared in print before the Superioress of Annecy (1722) disavowed their authenticity and arraigned them before the tribunal of Apostolic Notaries. Later, in 1823, when Blaise issued a new edition of St. Francis de Sales' works, in which he inserted these nine letters of St. Chantal to Mother Marie-Angélique, protests were issued on all sides. The convent of Paris, in particular, not satisfied with addressing a *Circulaire*, dated January 31, 1825, to the whole Order, warning it against an edition attributed by them (though, we think, wrongfully) to concealed Jansenists, thought it a duty to publish a protest against the work in the daily papers. And when Blaise soon after published a new edition of St. Francis de Sales' works, still retaining those nine letters, *Circulaires* were again sent around to the whole Order, expressive of the general anxiety awakened. We shall mention in particular the *Circulaire* of the convent of Venice, which is none other than the old convent of Lyons, driven into Italy by the Revolution. It bears date April 2, 1834, and distinctly declares that these letters are to be mistrusted, that they are the work of Jansenists, whose venom lies hidden in them.

It is necessary only to read those nine letters to understand the excitement they caused throughout the whole Order of the Visitation, and to say with it: *No, these are not St. Chantal's letters!* She did not write them, or, if she did, she did not address them to Mother Marie-Angélique: or, if they were really addressed to Mother Angélique, we may affirm that they have been falsified.

When we know Mother de Chantal, her spirit, her sanctity, her attention to give good example in everything; when we know the Rules of the Visitation and bear in mind the history of its origin, these letters impress us as a forgery.

Would Mother de Chantal, for instance, writing to Mother Angélique, call her not only her "*unique Mother*," but say, also, "There is no longer any creature on earth in whom I can confide but you," when she had Mother de la Roche, Mother de Beaumont, Mother Angélique Lhuillier, and so many others around her, and when at that very time we see her joyously placing herself like a child and with testimonies of extraordinary esteem in the hands of Mother de Blonay?

Would Mother de Chantal, writing to Mother Angélique, lay before her not only her most secret interior troubles, but the direction she had received from her Superioresses, and ask her: "May I cease to follow it?" And again: "I continue my daily Communions with great troubles and temptations sometimes, as well as all the other exercises. Ought I not to do so? Our good Mother says *yes*."

And to whom is Mother de Chantal supposed to write such effusions? To a stranger. And yet the Rule expressly enjoins upon the Sisters not to seek from without, but from their Superiors, the direction they need; and Mother de Chantal herself recommended that Rule so earnestly and practised it so faithfully. She had St. Francis de Sales, Rev. Michel Favre, M. Marchez, and St. Vincent de Paul for directors. For Superioresses she had Mother de Châtel, Mother Favre, and Mother de Blonay, and she adhered to their advice. To make her write letters and say to a stranger, to one not connected with her Order, "I have confidence in no one but you. My confessors and Superioresses give me such and such advice,—may I follow it?" is a monstrosity!

And who was she to whom Mother de Chantal is made to address these letters? Mother Marie-Angélique Arnauld! Really, their compilers did not reflect well on the matter. Mother de Chantal was twenty years older than Mother Marie-Angélique. They became acquainted in 1619. We have traced their relations. They loved each other very much; but in their intimacy St. Chantal was the mother, Madame Angélique the daughter. It was the latter who accused herself of her faults and imperfections; it was the former who gave advice. Twenty years passed. The two religious lost sight of each other. Their communication ceased; at least, no letter exists to prove that they continued to correspond. At the end of that time Mother de Chantal returned to Paris, seventy years old, the Foundress of eighty convents, the object of such veneration that she was forced to pass entire days in the parlor presenting her hands to be kissed by the crowds that flocked to see her.

And now, as these letters have it, the scene changes. Mother de Chantal becomes the daughter of Mother Angélique, asks all her permissions of her, submits to her the direction received from Superioresses, and says to her: "There is no longer any creature on earth in whom I can confide but you!"—It is false. It has been fabricated for the support of a cause, of a party.

And then, who is that great servant of God referred to on every page of this correspondence, and for whose benefit, evidently, it was composed? It is M. the Abbé of Saint-Cyran, they say; at least, such is the assertion on the margin of the Brussels edition of 1698. They would not have ventured so far in that of 1645, for it was too soon. Be it so: it is the Abbé of Saint-Cyran to whom these letters refer. It is he whom our saint calls "that great servant of God," "that virtuous prelate," "that good and true servant of God." It is he from whom she "awaits advice," to whom she has "so great a desire to open her heart," and of whom she says, "God knows my grief at being deprived of the only satisfaction I value or desire." And yet she did not know the Abbé of Saint-Cyran. She had never seen him. They had never even corresponded. She details her troubles to Mother Angélique, that the latter may lay them before "that great servant of God;" and when the Abbé writes a few lines to Mother de Chantal, it is to declare to her that he has no idea of her interior troubles. And when Mother de Chantal, after having written nine times to Mother Angélique, in order to reach through her "that great servant of God," whom she so highly esteems and to whom she is so anxious to open her heart; when, we say, Mother de Chantal decides at last to write to him, we find nothing from her pen but a few cold lines, polite and reserved, written, she expressly says, at Mother Angélique's solicitation. And, what is most remarkable, she makes no allusion whatever to the pretended letter that the Abbé of Saint-Cyran is said to have written to her some days previously. The unlikelihood, the inconsistency of the whole affair is palpable.

It would certainly be rash, at the present late period and in the absence of the original papers, to attempt to arrest the hand of the forger in the very act, and determine the words altered; but we may be permitted, at least, to give utterance to our thoughts. Of the nine letters attributed to Mother de Chantal, some are fabricated, others have been falsified. Those marked CCCCX., CCCCXI., CCCCXII., and CCCCXV. (Blaise edition) are, indeed, Mother de Chantal's. What forger could ever have invented that faithful description of our saint's interior troubles, or that beautiful exposition of Mother de Châtel's solid principles of direction? These letters are genuine; but they were never addressed to Mother Angélique. They were written to a Superioress of the Visitation, to Mother de Blonay, perhaps, who is the only one we can think of our saint's speaking to in such a way at the time. Perhaps, also,—for Mother de Blonay never went to Paris,—they were addressed to Mother Angélique Lhuillier, to whom we find the saint writing on the most delicate subjects, and through whom she sometimes consulted St. Vincent de Paul and the Archbishop of Sens. The address, or the addresses, of these letters—for there is nothing to prove that they are all to the same person—have been erased, and instead of the original name, "Mother Angélique of Port-Royal" has been substituted. This is the first alteration.

In these letters there is question of a "great servant of God." This was probably St. Vincent de Paul, whom St. Chantal constantly consulted from 1622, though it may possibly have been Mgr. de Bellegarde, Archbishop of Sens, in whom she had great confidence. Perhaps even there was question of both of these holy men, according to the different letters, one being called "the good servant of God," the other "our pious prelate." The Jansenists took hold of this vague designation and, in order to make a change, embellished it with some words that exclude St. Vincent de Paul and introduce M. of Saint-Cyran. Take, for instance, the following passage : "It seems to me," writes Mother de Chantal, "that there is but one heart between us, and that your prayers and those of that worthy servant of God, which *you have gained for me through the Divine Mercy*"— Here we see what may have been added, how easily, and for what purpose.

We suspect, also, the expression, "that good servant of God," of having been designedly repeated, of having been slipped in at the beginning of the letters, in the closing salutations, and wherever it could be inserted. "I beg you to commend me to God," etc., "*and that the good servant of God will do the same.*" "Remember me to our dearest Sisters *and to the good servant of God.*" "It is a comfort for me to tell you *and that good servant of God* something of my troubles," etc. It is not difficult to see through the whole affair. The style, moreover, we may say in passing, differs entirely from our saint's manner of acting.

In the effort to multiply in these letters allusions and greetings to the "good servant of God," the compilers occasionally overdo the matter and misconstrue the sense. One of them, issued by the Jansenists, not in full, but in fragments (the CCCCXIITH, Blaise edition), has been published entire by the Sisters of the Visitation. In the Jansenistic version we see an alteration and misconstruction for the purpose of imposing the belief that there is in it question of the Abbé of Saint-Cyran, whilst the person alluded to is, in fact, St. Francis de Sales. We shall give the circumstances. It is important for us to do so, since we here detect the forger in the very act. St. Chantal was suffering great interior pain, new as it seemed to her, for she did not remember ever before having experienced the like. Suddenly she came across an old letter among those of St. Francis de Sales, in which that very trouble was clearly explained. She was astonished ; she could scarcely believe her eyes. She applied to a friend, to Mother Angélique, if you choose, to assure herself that she was not deceived. She writes to her : "Read Letter LXV. of Bk. IV. It gives me some little relief and light to think that this holy man meant me. . . . If you tell me that you are sure that this great servant of God" (St. Francis de Sales) "speaks of my suffering, it will give me great strength. I was surprised at that letter, for I do not remember ever having experienced a similar pain of mind. The temptations I used to have were against some point of faith, as may be seen from his letters; but what I now feel is quite different. The letter, also, is different from the first, which makes me think that God permitted me formerly to have a slight attack of what I now feel, in order to lead that holy man to write it." All is perfectly clear.

But the desire to make St. Chantal appear as if consulting Saint-Cyran blinded the Jansenists. Instead of this clause, so well explained by what precedes and follows: "If you can tell me that you are sure that this great servant of God" (St. Francis de Sales, of whom she had just been speaking) "speaks of my suffering, it will give me great strength," they, by a slight alteration in the text, write: "If you would tell me that this great servant of God and *yourself* see and are sure that it is my suffering," etc. The change is seemingly of no importance; but by the few words, "*this great servant of God and you*," St. Francis de Sales is excluded, and by uniting this clause to what follows, "*I have a great desire to open my heart to you and this worthy servant of God*," Saint-Cyran is substituted for the holy Bishop of Geneva.

After having given an example of their falsification, we shall now name the letters fabricated: Letter CCCCXIII.; the first paragraph of Letter CCCCXV.; perhaps, also, Letter CCCCXIV., an imitation, a sort of copy of St. Chantal's first letter to St. Francis de Sales; and, perhaps, even Letter CCCCXVII. We suspect as fabrications all those short notes that contain nothing original. They were fabricated, doubtless, for the purpose of accompanying, corroborating, and explaining the genuine letters that have been falsified. But we do not insist on this as true. It is too difficult, as we have already remarked, to conclude anything with exactitude in the absence of the original letters. We have said enough, however, to show in general the little value to be attached to these letters, and to prove substantially, we think, that they are enveloped in too great obscurity ever to allow their being accepted as authentic documents. Besides, should they be accepted by some, we have proved that there is nothing in them to favor a conclusion against the opinions and virtues of the venerable servant of God whose life we have written, and this is sufficient for our purpose.

NOTE II.

VERBAL PROCESS OF THE ERECTION OF THE VISITATION INTO A RELIGIOUS ORDER.[1]

WE, François de Sales, by the grace of God and the Apostolic See, Bishop and Prince of Geneva, and a commissary deputed by the Holy Apostolic See, by the tenor of the Brief given at Rome in St. Mary Major's, under the ring of the Fisherman, on the 23d of April of the present year, putting the said Brief into execution, after having seen and considered everything, have raised and do raise the house of the Congregation of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary to a convent under the Rule of St. Augustine, proclaiming, by the same Apostolic authority, that all the Sisters or Religious of the said house and convent are henceforth bound to make use of and enjoy all and each of the immunities, privileges, indults, and concessions enjoyed by other convents of religious women living under the same Rule. We, also, hereby enjoin and impose upon the said Sisters the observance of inclosure, according to the Decree of the sacred Council of Trent, with all the rules laid down for solemn vows; and whereas our beloved Sisters in Christ Jesus, Jeanne-Frânçoise Frémyot, the Superioress, and Marie-Madeleine de Mouxy, have declared to us that they still possess some property in the world, of which they have not yet been able conveniently to dispose, and which, however, they desire to renounce and give up before being bound by solemn vows, we fix for both of them the period of six months, counting from the date of these presents, to the end that they may dispose of the said property during this interval of time, after the expiration of which they shall be obliged to declare whether they wish to take upon themselves the obligation of solemn vows. And we, after this period shall have elapsed, and after we shall have received their declaration, will provide for their state, according as we shall judge expedient.

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[1] Archives of the Visitation of Annecy. Register of the Bishopric of Geneva.

Given at Annecy, Sunday, October 16, 1618, in presence of Reverend Jean-François de Sales, Chanter and Canon of the Church of Geneva, Vicar and Official of the Bishopric; Philibert Roger, D. D.; Étienne Décombaz, Gallois de Régard, François Roux, Canons of the said Church of Geneva; Rev. Michel Favre, priest; and MM. François Favre and Guichard Rosset, witnesses.

NOTE III.

V. ✠ J. !

AN ACCOUNT OF THE HEART OF ST. CHANTAL.

What follows is a faithful copy of a writing by Mother Marie-Augustine de Damas, who was Superioress of the Convent of the Visitation in Moulins at the time of the Revolution of 1793.

THE heart of St. Jeanne-Françoise de Chantal, Foundress of the Order of the Visitation, is preserved in the convent of Moulins, in Bourbonnais, inclosed in a silver-gilt reliquary with double crystals, and deposited in the small tabernacle of the altar-piece of the altar, or oratory, erected in the room in which the holy Foundress breathed her last. For a long time the Sisters noticed that the precious relic was of a very dark brown color, that it had dried up and flattened, had lost the shape of a heart, and seemed to be sensibly decreasing in size, when, December 13, 1789, the anniversary of the saint's death, their confessor suggested that they should honor it with some special acts of homage, for the purpose of moving the saint to interest herself in those afflicting times for the preservation of her Order and to pray for the Church and the country. It was, in consequence, placed that very morning on the Superioress's seat, wreathed with garlands, and two lighted candles before it. The Sisters remained in station near it all day long. One of them whilst praying before it, the community Mass having not yet been said, complained lovingly to the saint of the diminution that had taken place in the size of her heart, and she spoke of it at recreation. The Superioress gave the relic to the confessor to place on the altar during Mass, thus to satisfy his piety. He brought it back at the end of the Holy Sacrifice, and gave the community a most touching exhortation. During Vespers the Superioress was the first to perceive a change in the holy heart. She was greatly surprised, and thinking it some illusion due to her own eyes and the light, she took every precaution possible to assure herself that she was not deceived. She spoke of it to no one until after evening prayer, when she carried it back to the oratory, accompanied by the greater part of the community, placed it upon the altar, and then, without stating her reasons, told the Sisters to draw near and examine it. There was not one who did not utter a cry of joyous surprise at the change that had taken place in their precious treasure. It now filled the reliquary from top to bottom, the base being curved, as if not having sufficient room. Before this change there was a decided space at the top of the reliquary. The auricles were enlarged, and the whole heart swelled out and of the form and color of an embalmed heart, which it had almost entirely lost. This wonder gave rise to a sudden outburst of joy, admiration, and gratitude, which was increased when the Assistant of the community, without mentioning her motive for inquiring, went to ask the confessor in what condition he had found the relic. He answered: "Beautiful! I could not keep my eyes off it. This caused me so much the more pleasure since, last May, when passing through the city on my way to Septfonts, and the Superioress gratified my desire to venerate the relic, it appeared to me small and shrivelled. I made no remark, for fear of distressing her and her community. To-day, however, it presents a very different appearance."

It is almost certain that this wonderful change took place during the august Sacrifice of the Altar. Since that time it has remained in the same state, beautiful and distended. To-day, March 24th, nearly three months and a half after the change, it has been submitted to a skilful anatomist and surgeon. The following was written at his dictation:

"The heart is reduced to a little less than half its normal size. The two ventricles are very distinct and in the natural state. The two auricles are plainly visible, especially the left. The origin of the great vessels, the aorta springing from the left ventricle, the pulmonary artery rising from the right, are plainly seen. We feel assured that it is in a state that will undergo no change. We know that anatomical specimens, after reaching a certain stage of dessication, do not increase in volume, even if exposed to the moisture of the atmosphere. They are subject to the attacks of insects, unless the greatest precautions are taken; hence, it results that, if such accidents happen to them, they become putrified. This heart is really in a perfect state; and if, as we are assured, it was small and withered before December 13, 1789, the size and consistence it has since acquired can be but a supernatural effect. Experience proves that parts of the human body, embalmed for a length of time, or dried either by solar heat or other agents, never resume any degree of consistency, extension, or dilatation."

The more closely the surgeon examined the heart, the more convinced he became of the impossibility of any fermentation having produced a greater expansion in its parts.

To-day, June 3, 1793, the holy heart is still in the same beautiful state.

SISTER MARIE-AUGUSTINE DE DAMAS, *Superioress.*

VERBAL PROCESS DRAWN UP ON THE OCCASION OF DIVERSE CHANGES IN THE HEART OF ST. JEANNE-FRANÇOISE FRÉMYOT DE CHANTAL.

On this fourth day of the month of May, in the year one thousand eight hundred and thirty-one, we, the undersigned Superior of the Great Seminary of Nevers and Vicar-General of the diocese, having been invited by the Lady Superioress of the convent of the Visitation of Charité-sur-Loire to come to verify the changes wrought in the heart of St. Jeanne-Françoise Frémyot de Chantal, preserved in the said convent, proceeded thither. Having had the holy heart, which was inclosed in a silver reliquary, brought before us, we venerated it. We next questioned the Superioress and the Councillors of the community on the different changes they had observed in the state of the holy heart. All unanimously affirmed:

I. That they and all the Sisters of the community had remarked in the latter part of the month of July or the first days of August, in the year one thousand eight hundred and twenty-eight, that the heart of St. Chantal had decreased in size a little more than a third, so that it no longer touched any part of the inner surface of the heart-shaped reliquary.

II. That not having observed this precious relic since the time of its decrease in size, they had not positively perceived a notable change in the holy heart, until the second of June, in the year one thousand eight hundred and twenty-nine; that since that day they have seen it increase in size remarkably, especially in the beginning of the month of October, in the year eighteen hundred and thirty. At that time the upper and the lower parts of the holy heart touched in a manner very perceptible the two extremities of the reliquary.

III. That on this present day, the fourth of the month of May, they remarked that the upper part of the holy heart had undergone a notable flattening, had lost in breadth, and that the lower part was puffed out, expanded on both sides, particularly on the left, so that it pressed against the inner surface of the reliquary.

After having received the foregoing testimony of the said religious of the Visitation, we read the certificate of a celebrated physician by whom the holy heart had been closely examined on the twelfth of April, in the year one thousand eight hundred and thirty-one. We think it our duty to give the following extract from this certificate.

After having given the account received from the religious of the changes that had taken place in the holy heart, which account exactly coincides with that which we ourselves received from the lips of the same religious, he adds: "Having caused this invaluable relic to be brought to me, I declare that I find it well cased and perfectly secure from any external action, also well embalmed and in the manner in which operations of this nature are performed in the Medical School of Paris for the preservation of anatomical specimens. I openly declare, and I can assert, that I have never heard of a like phenomenon occurring to the specimens similarly preserved in the Medical School of Paris. The anatomical specimens of which I speak are, nevertheless, subjected to the action of various external agencies, such as heat, cold, moisture, etc., which in time tend to destroy all things; and yet for centuries they have undergone no change. The facts related by the religious, who attentively observed them, can be explained neither by physics nor chemistry; and having no examples of similar observations, it may be concluded that the afore-mentioned facts are the effects of supernatural phenomena beyond the acquired knowledge of the present day."

As for ourselves, we certify: 1st, That having attentively considered the holy heart in the latter part of the month of September, in the year one thousand eight hundred and thirty, we found it in a very good state, without our being able to affirm that any notable increase in its size had taken place; 2d, that on the twenty-first of March, in the year one thousand eight hundred and thirty-one, it was again presented to us, and that our first sentiment at sight of the holy heart was one of surprise and admiration. We then affirmed that there could be no doubt whatever of a notable increase in its size. The upper part of the holy heart was very perceptibly swollen, and appeared to us very like a thick lip folded back upon itself ; 3d, that on the fourth day of the month of May, the present date, we have examined it very attentively, and we have observed that the upper part has become flat whilst the lower has greatly developed, especially upon the left side of the heart, pressing on that side against the inner surface of the reliquary.

Such is the testimony we think it our duty to render to the truth, upon the changes we ourselves have remarked in the holy heart. We have been careful to reject from our memoranda everything not rigorously certain, in order to guarantee by our testimony nothing of which we are not fully convinced. What we have seen with our own eyes joined to what has been observed on several occasions by all the religious of the community leaves in our mind no doubt as to the reality of the different changes mentioned above. As to the cause of these changes, we believe with the skilful physician whose words we have quoted above, that it is not to be found in the natural order of things ; hence, it belongs to the supernatural order, which fact should reanimate our faith and sustain our hope in the troublous times in which we live. Since it is God alone who could have wrought such a prodigy, we are again confirmed in our belief that the religion of which St. Chantal was by her heroic virtue during her lifetime one of the most beautiful ornaments is truly divine. We find, also, in the miracle a powerful motive to hope that God will protect us, for He is not wont to work such miracles in favor of those that He has determined to abandon in punishment of their crimes.

Drawn up at Charité-sur-Loire, this fourth day of the month of May, in the year one thousand eight hundred and thirty-one.

FRAIN,
Vicar-General and Superior of the Seminary.

SISTER MARIE-MADELEINE NANTIER, *Superioress.*
SISTER MARIE-AUGUSTINE RICAUD, *Assistant.*
SISTER JOSÉPHINE-EMMANUELLE DE ROYER, *Councillor.*
SISTER ANNE-MARIE MARCOU, *Councillor.*
SISTER MARIE-THÉRÈSE-ÉLÉONORE OLIVIER, *Councillor.*
SISTER MARIE DE CHANTAL ANDRIEU.
SISTER MARIE-SÉRAPHIQUE SENLY.
SISTER MARIE-ANGÉLIQUE MARIZOT.
SISTER MARIE-JOSÈPHE DESGRANGES.
SISTER MARIE-THÉODORE QUENOUILLE.
SISTER MARIE DE SALES CHARLET.

CERTIFICATE.

I, the undersigned, a doctor of medicine, living in the town of Charité-sur-Loire, declare that I have been consulted by the religious of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, established in the aforesaid city, upon the question whether it was possible to explain by physics or chemistry certain facts that they had remarked several times and at very distant intervals, connected with the heart of St. Chantal, their Foundress, which has been in their possession since the happy demise of that saint on the thirteenth day of December, in the year one thousand six hundred and forty-one, said heart being well embalmed and enshrined with all the care that could have been applied to a work of the kind at the period of St. Chantal's decease. The religious above-mentioned affirm that they have twice seen it diminish in size and assume a dull hue, which circumstance made them each time fearful that the holy heart was about to fall to dust. On the first of the said occasions the relic was reduced to half its ordinary volume, and on the second it decreased only a little more than a third. The first diminution took place in the year one thousand seven hundred and eighty-eight, or about that time, and the heart still continued in that state on the thirteenth of December, one thousand seven hundred and eighty-nine. The second was observed on the last day of July, or the first of August, in the year one thousand eight hundred and twenty-eight; and each time the religious affirm that they saw it resume its natural state. The first time the miracle took place suddenly and whilst the heart was exposed upon the altar during the Holy Sacrifice of Mass, on the thirteenth of December, one thousand seven hundred and ninety-one.

As to the repetition of this miracle, the religious cannot affirm when it took place, as some time elapsed after the diminution of the relic before they examined it closely. They did not positively perceive the happy change until the second day of June, in the year one thousand eight hundred and twenty-nine. The heart resumed its original lustre, as well as its ordinary volume and hue.

Having caused this invaluable relic to be brought to me, I declare that I found it well cased and perfectly secure from any external action, also well embalmed in the manner in which operations of this kind are practised in the Medical School of Paris for the preservation of anatomical specimens.

I openly avow and I can declare that I have never heard of a like phenomenon occurring to specimens similarly preserved in the Medical School of Paris. The anatomical specimens of which I speak are, nevertheless, exposed to the action of such external agencies as heat, cold, moisture, etc., etc., that in time tend to destroy all things, and for centuries they have undergone no change. The facts related by the religious that attentively observed them can be explained neither by physics nor chemistry ; and having no examples of similar observations, it may be concluded that the afore-mentioned facts are the effects of supernatural phenomena beyond the acquired knowledge of the present day.

This twelfth day of April, one thousand eight hundred and thirty-one.

MATTHIEU,
Physician.

LIST OF VISITATION CONVENTS.

(Taken from Visitation Chronicles.)

1. First Convent of Annecy, Savoy, founded June 6, 1610. Re-established July 2, 1824.
2. First Convent of Lyons (Archbishopric), founded from Annecy by St. Chantal, Feb. 2, 1615. Transferred to Mantua in 1793, to Venice in 1801.
3. Moulins, Bourbonnais, founded from Annecy, Aug. 25, 1616. Re-established first at Charité-sur-Loire, afterward at Nevers.
4. First Convent of Grenoble (Bishopric), Dauphiny, founded from Annecy, April 8, 1618. *Suppressed.*
5. Bourges (Archbishopric), Berri, founded from Annecy, Nov. 15, 1618. *Suppressed.*
6. First Convent of Paris (Archbishopric), founded from Annecy by St. Chantal, who was the first Superioress, May 1, 1619. Re-established in 1807.
7. Montferrand, Auvergne, diocese of Clermont. The Superioress and one Sister were from the Convent of Annecy, the others from that of Lyons. Founded June 7, 1620. *Suppressed.*
8. Nevers (Bishopric), Nivernais. The Superioress and the Assistant were from the Convent of Annecy, the others from that of Moulins. Founded July 21, 1620. *Suppressed.*
9. Orléans (Bishopric), Beauce, founded from Annecy, Sept. 9, 1620. Re-established Jan. 1, 1803.
10. Valence (Bishopric), Dauphiny, founded from Lyons, June 8, 1621. Re-established Nov. 21, 1815.
11. Dijon (Bishopric), Burgundy, founded from Annecy, May 8, 1622. Re-established in 1822.
12. Belley (Bishopric), Bugey, founded from Annecy, Aug. 20, 1622. *Suppressed.*
13. Saint-Étienne en Forez, diocese of Lyons, founded from Lyons, Oct. 1, 1622. Re-established in 1835 by the Convent of Romans.
14. First Convent of Marseilles (Bishopric), Provence, founded from Annecy, one Sister being from the first Convent of Lyons, May 14, 1623. Re-established Aug. 17, 1806.
15. Riom, Auvergne, diocese of Clermont. The Superioress was

from Annecy, the other Sisters from the Convent of Moulins Founded Dec. 8, 1623. Re-established in 1818.

16. CHAMBÉRY, Savoy (formerly of the diocese of Grenoble, now an Archbishopric), founded from Annecy, Jan. 17, 1624. Re-established Sept. 30, 1806.
17. First Convent of AVIGNON (Archbishopric), Provence, founded from Lyons, March 10, 1624. Re-established July 15, 1821.
18. First Convent of AIX (Archbishopric), Provence, founded from Grenoble, Aug. 2, 1624. Re-established by the Convent of Tarascon, October, 1858.
19. AUTUN (Bishopric), Burgundy, founded from Moulins, Sept. 8, 1624. Re-established July 16, 1836.
20. EMBRUN (Archbishopric), Dauphiny, founded from Grenoble, April 25, 1625. *Suppressed.*
21. THONON, Chablais (formerly of the diocese of Geneva, now of Annecy), founded from Annecy, first at Évian, Aug. 6, 1625, and transferred to Thonon July 22, 1627. Re-established June 6, 1837.
22. RUMILLY, Savoy (formerly of the diocese of Geneva), founded from Annecy, Sept. 29, 1625. *Suppressed.*
23. BLOIS (Bishopric), Touraine. The Superioress was from Annecy, the Sisters from Nevers. Founded Nov. 4, 1625. This community, although expelled during the Revolution of 1793, remained united under the Rule and obedience. It was transferred to Mans Nov. 12, 1822.
24. PONT-À-MOUSSON, Lorraine, diocese of Toul, founded from Annecy, May 6, 1626. *Suppressed.*
25. Second Convent of PARIS, founded from the first. The Superioress and one Sister were from Annecy. Founded Aug. 13, 1626. Re-established in 1800. This community remained united during the Revolution of 1793.
26. PARAY, Charolais, diocese of Autun, founded from Lyons, Sept. 4, 1626. Re-established June 4, 1823.
27. BOURG, Bresse (formerly in the diocese of Lyons, now in that of Belley), founded from Annecy, March 19, 1627. Re-established in 1806.
28. CRÉMIEU, Dauphiny (formerly in the diocese of Vienne), founded from Annecy, Sept. 21, 1627. *Suppressed.*
29. CAEN, Normandy, diocese of Bayeux, founded from the first Convent of Paris, first at Dol, Oct. 21, 1627, transferred to Caen Nov. 16, 1631. Re-established Nov. 21, 1806.
30. Second Convent of LYONS, founded from the first of that city, Dec. 21, 1627. Re-established, Nov. 4, 1809, by the senior professed of Châlon-sur-Saône.
31. CREST, Dauphiny, diocese of Die, founded from Valence, May 8,

1628. The Superioress was from the first Convent of Lyons. *Suppressed.*

32. SAINT-FLOUR, Auvergne (Bishopric), founded from Montferrand, Sept. 8, 1628. Re-established in 1804.
33. MONTARGIS, Gâtinais, diocese of Sens, founded from Orléans, Oct. 5, 1628. *Suppressed.*
34. First Convent of RENNES, Brittany (Bishopric), founded from Orléans, Oct. 27, 1628. Re-established in 1815.
35. ARLES, Provence (Archbishopric), founded July 6, 1629. The Superioress was from the Convent of Grenoble, two Sisters from that of Avignon, and the others from that of Aix. *Suppressed.*
36. CONDRIEU, Dauphiny (formerly in the diocese of Vienne, now in that of Lyons), founded from the first Convent of Lyons, Jan. 1, 1630. Re-established Oct. 8, 1821.
37. DIGNE, Provence (Bishopric), founded March 25, 1630. The Superioress was from the first Convent of Grenoble, and the Sisters from that of Embrun. *Suppressed.*
38. LE PUY, Auvergne (Bishopric), founded from the first Convent of Lyons, July 14, 1630. Re-established March 24, 1808.
39. BESANÇON, Franche-Comté (Archbishopric), founded from Dijon, Aug. 25, 1630. The Superioress was from Annecy. *Suppressed.*
40. NANTES, Brittany (Bishopric), founded Sept. 15, 1630. The Superioress was from Grenoble, the Sisters from Moulins. Re-established July 9, 1810.
41. First Convent of ROUEN, Normandy (Archbishopric), founded from the first Convent of Paris, Oct. 27, 1630. Re-established in 1806.
42. MEAUX, Brie (Archbishopric), founded from the first Convent of Paris, June 14, 1631. Re-established May 1, 1802.
43. MONTPELLIER, Languedoc (Bishopric), founded from Annecy, June 17, 1631. Re-established in 1818.
44. SISTERON, Provence (Bishopric), founded June 20, 1631. The Superioress and one Sister were from Annecy, two Sisters from the first Convent of Grenoble, and two from Chambéry. *Suppressed.*
45. TROYES, Champagne (Bishopric), founded from the second Convent of Paris, July 6, 1631. This community, although expelled during the Revolution of 1793, continued united under the Rule and obedience, and returned to its convent, Oct. 25, 1807.
46. APT, Provence (Bishopric), founded July 6, 1631. The Superioress and four Sisters were from the Convent of Grenoble, one from Annecy, and another from Thonon. *Suppressed.*
47. BEAUNE, diocese of Autun, founded from Dijon, Jan. 17, 1632.

One Sister was from Annecy, and one from Belley. *Suppressed.*

48. Forcalquier, Provence, diocese of Fréjus, founded from Avignon, first at Rié, Aug. 17, 1631, transferred to Forcalquier, March 9, 1632. *Suppressed.*
49. Romans (formerly of the diocese of Vienne, Dauphiny, now of Valence), founded June 10, 1632. Re-established Aug. 4, 1801. The Superioress was from the first Convent of Lyons, the Sisters from that of Valence.
50. Draguignan, Provence (Bishopric), founded from Aix, July 2, 1632. The Superioress was from Annecy. *Suppressed.*
51. Macon, founded from the first Convent of Lyons, July 2, 1632. Re-established Sept. 24, 1805.
52. Villefranche, Beaujolais, diocese of Lyons, founded Sept. 21, 1632. The Superioress was from the first Convent of Lyons, the Sisters from the second. *Suppressed.*
53. Vannes, Brittany (Bishopric), founded from Moulins, first at Croisic, Sept. 28, 1632, transferred to Vannes Sept. 8, 1638. *Suppressed.*
54. La Valdotte, Savoy (Bishopric), founded from Chambéry, Oct. 15, 1632. One Sister was from Annecy. *Suppressed.*
55. Nancy, Lorraine (Bishopric), founded Dec. 24, 1632. The Superioress and one Sister were from Annecy, and one Sister from Pont-à-Mousson. Re-established Nov. 21, 1807.
56. Metz, Lorraine (Bishopric), founded April 24, 1633. The Superioress was from Moulins, the Sisters from Riom. Re-established Oct. 5, 1817.
57. Tours, Touraine (Archbishopric), founded from Orléans, May 5, 1633. *Suppressed.*
58. Montluel, diocese of Belley, founded, first at Saint-Amour, May 22, 1633, transferred to Montluel October, 1640. The Superioress was from Annecy, the Sisters from Bourg-en-Bresse. Re-established April 19, 1820.
59. Pont-Saint-Esprit, Languedoc, diocese of Viviers, founded from Annecy, June 14, 1633. The Superioress was from the first Convent of Lyons. *Suppressed.*
60. Semur, founded from Dijon, Aug. 27, 1633. *Suppressed.*
61. Poitiers, Poitou (Bishopric), founded from Bourges, Nov. 6, 1802.
62. Mamers, diocese of Chartres, founded from Blois, Nov. 29, 1633. The Superioress was from Nevers. *Suppressed.*
63. Gray, diocese of Besançon, founded from Besançon, first at Champlitte, March 13, 1634, transferred to Gray, 1637. The Superioress was from Dijon. *Suppressed.*

64. TOULON, Provence (Bishopric), founded from Aix, March 25, 1634. *Suppressed.*
65. Second Convent of ANNECY, founded from the first of Annecy, June 11, Feast of the Most Holy Trinity, 1634. *Suppressed.*
66. LE MANS, Maine (Bishopric), founded from the first Convent of Paris, July, 1634. Re-established in 1822 by the transfer of the Community of Blois. (See Blois, No. 23.)
67. PIGNEROL (Bishopric), founded Sept. 27, 1634. The Superioress and two Sisters were from Annecy, the other Sisters from Embrun. This Community, though obliged to leave their convent, Oct. 7, 1802, continued united under the Rule and obedience. They returned Dec. 20, 1803, having retained possession of their convent.
68. GRASSE, Provence (formerly a Bishopric, now of the diocese of Fréjus), founded from Chambéry, Oct. 28, 1634. One Sister was from Annecy, one from Thonon, and one from Aix. Re-established in 1807.
69. MELUN, France, diocese of Sens, founded from Montargis, March 25, 1635. The Superioress was from Annecy. *Suppressed.*
70. The first Convent of NICE, Piedmont (Bishopric), founded from Marseilles, July 29, 1635. The Superioress was from the first Convent of Lyons, and two of the Sisters from Annecy. Re-established, Sept. 11, 1819.
71. ANGERS, Anjou (Bishopric), founded from the second Convent of Paris, Jan. 6, 1636.
72. CHÂLON-SUR-SAÔNE (Bishopric), founded from Dijon, Feb. 22, 1636. The Superioress was from the first Convent of Lyons. *Suppressed.*
73. FRIBOURG, Switzerland (formerly a Bishopric, now in the diocese of Lausanne), founded July 16, 1636. The Superioress was from the first Convent of Annecy, the Sisters from Besançon.
74. PÉRIGUEUX, capital of Périgord (Bishopric), founded, first, at Guéret, Aug. 10, 1636, and transferred to Périgueux, March 24, 1641. The Superioress was from Moulins, the Sisters from Riom. Re-established Nov. 21, 1809.
75. CHAROLLES, diocese of Autun, founded from Autun, May 25, 1637. The Superioress was from Moulins. *Suppressed.*
76. ALBY, capital and archbishopric of Albigeois, founded from Saint-Flour, May 25, 1638. The Superioress was from Montferrand. *Suppressed.*
77. TURIN, Piedmont (Archbishopric), founded by St. Chantal, Nov. 21, 1638. The Superioress and some Sisters were from the first Convent of Annecy, the others from the second. Re-established 1825.

78. La Châtre, Berri, diocese of Bourges, founded March 25, 1639. The Superioress and Sisters were from the Convent of Nevers, the Assistant from that of Moulins. *Suppressed.*
79. Saint-Denis, France, founded from the first Convent of Paris, June 30, 1639. *Suppressed.*
80. Dieppe, diocese of Rouen, founded April 25, 1640. The Superioress and Sisters were from the Convent of Rouen, the Assistant from the first Convent of Paris. *Suppressed.*
81. Bordeaux (Archbishopric), founded from the first Convent of Lyons, July 2, 1640. *Suppressed.*
82. Amiens, Picardy (Bishopric), founded from the second Convent of Paris, Sept. 14, 1640. The Superioress was from the first Convent of Paris. Re-established in 1803. This Community, reunited in 1797, dates its re-establishment from 1803, the time of the election.
83. Bayonne (Bishopric), founded from the first Convent of Paris, Sept. 21, 1641. *Suppressed.*
84. Second Convent of Rennes, founded from the first, July 16, 1641. *Suppressed.*
85. Third Convent of Lyons, founded from the first, Sept. 27, 1641. *Suppressed.*
86. Tarascon (formerly of the diocese of Avignon, now of that of Aix), founded from the first Convent of Avignon, Oct. 14, 1641. Re-established Nov. 23, 1843.
87. Villefranche, Rouergue, diocese of Rhodez, founded from Montferrand, May 25, 1642. *Suppressed.*
88. Second Convent of Rouen, founded from the first, June 6, 1642. Re-established Dec. 25, 1806.
89. Vercelli (Bishopric), in the Milanese, founded from La Valdotte, July 1, 1642. *Suppressed.*
90. Montbrison, diocese of Lyons, founded from Saint-Étienne en Forez, Aug. 13, 1642. *Suppressed.*
91. Agen, Guienne (Bishopric), founded from Bordeaux, Nov. 4, 1642. The Superioress and some of the Sisters were from the first Convent of Lyons. *Suppressed.*
92. Second Convent of Avignon, founded from the first, Nov. 22, 1642. *Suppressed.*
93. Salins, diocese of Besançon, founded from Gray, Aug. 21, 1643. The Superioress was from the first Convent of Annecy, one Sister from Besançon, and the others from Gray. *Suppressed.*
94. Montélimart, diocese of Valence, founded Sept. 5, 1643. The Superioress and the Sisters were from the Convents of Crest and Valence. Re-established Oct. 15, 1806.
95. Limoges, capital and Bishopric of Limousin, founded from Châtre, Dec. 29, 1643. The Superioress was from Nevers, two

Sisters from Bourges, the others from Châtre. Re-established May 20, 1813.

96. ISSOUDUN, diocese of Bourges in Berri, founded from Bourges, July 10, 1644. *Suppressed.*

97. CASTELLANE, diocese of Senez, founded from Apt, Aug. 15, 1644. The Superioress and one Sister were from the Convent of Grasse. *Suppressed.*

98. VIENNE, Dauphiny (Archbishopric), founded from Condrieu, Sept. 8, 1644. *Suppressed.*

99. TULLE, Limousin (Bishopric), founded from Périgueux, Nov. 21, 1644. The Superioress was from Riom. *Suppressed.*

100. SAINT-MARCELLIN (formerly of the diocese of Vienne, now of Grenoble), founded from Romans, April 28, 1645. Re-established July 24, 1817.

101. SOLEURE, diocese of Lausanne, founded from Fribourg, Nov. 1, 1645. The Superioress was from Annecy.

102. LA FLÈCHE, diocese of Angers, founded from Nantes, March 18, 1646. *Suppressed.*

103. AVALLON, Burgundy, diocese of Autun, founded April 17, 1646. The Superioress was from the Convent of Moulins, three Sisters from Semur, and two from Châlon. *Suppressed.*

104. DÔLE, Franche-Comté (formerly in the diocese of Besançon, now in that of Sainte-Claude), founded from Annecy, June 6, 1646. One Sister was from Gray, one from Fribourg. Re-established July 26, 1826. (See Poligny, No. 182.)

105. TOULOUSE, Languedoc (Archbishopric), founded from Montpellier, Jan. 1, 1647. Re-established May, 1807.

106. CHARTRES, Beauce (Bishopric), founded from Orléans, April 15, 1647. Re-established 1814.

107. SAUMUR, diocese of Angers, founded from Angers, July 25, 1647. The Superioress and four Sisters were from the Convent of Paris. *Suppressed.*

108. LOUDUN, diocese of Poitiers, founded from Blois, Jan. 12, 1648. The Superioress and four Sisters were from Blois, and three others from Limoges. *Suppressed.*

109. BOURBON-LANCY, diocese of Autun, founded from Riom, Jan. 25, 1648. *Suppressed.*

110. Second Convent of GRENOBLE, founded from the first, June 7, 1648, Feast of the Holy Trinity. *Suppressed.*

111. COMPIÈGNE, Picardy, diocese of Soissons, founded from Paris, June 13, 1649. *Suppressed.*

112. CLERMONT, Auvergne (Bishopric), founded from Montferrand, Sept. 2, 1649. Re-established 1824.

113. BILLOM, Auvergne, diocese of Clermont, founded from the first Convent of Paris, June 11, 1650. *Suppressed.*

114. MONS, Hainault, diocese of Namur, founded from the second Convent of Paris, Aug. 15, 1650. *Suppressed.*
115. ABBEVILLE, diocese of Amiens, founded from Amiens, Aug. 16, 1650. *Suppressed.*
116. CHAILLOT, diocese of Paris, founded from the first Convent of Paris, June 28, 1651. *Suppressed.*
117. SEYSSEL, diocese of Geneva, founded from Annecy, July 2, 1651. *Suppressed.*
118. AURILLAC, Auvergne, diocese of Saint-Flour, founded from Saint-Flour, July 2, 1651. Re-established Sept. 30, 1822.
119. LA ROCHEFOUCAULD, diocese of Angoulême, founded from Limoges, July 12, 1651. The Superioress and two Sisters were from the Convent of Bourges. *Suppressed.*
120. Second Convent of MARSEILLES, founded from the first, May 22, 1652. Re-established Aug. 10, 1808.
121. Second Convent of AIX, Provence, founded from the first, Oct. 28, 1652. *Suppressed.*
122. SAINT-AMOUR, diocese of Lyons, founded in 1633, transferred to Montluel, on account of war, in 1640, and re-established by the said Convent of Montluel Aug. 15, 1653. *Suppressed.*
123. LANGRES, Champagne (Bishopric), founded from the first Convent of Annecy, Nov. 19, 1653. *Suppressed.*
124. WARSAW, capital and Bishopric of Poland, founded Aug. 9, 1654. The Superioress and some Sisters were from Lyons, the others from Troyes.
125. ARONA, diocese of Novara, founded from Vercelli, Aug. 8, 1657.
126. AUXERRE, Burgundy (Bishopric), founded from Orléans, Feb. 12, 1659. *Suppressed.*
127. ALENÇON, diocese of Mans, founded from Mamers, June 8, 1659. Re-established shortly after the Revolution of 1793, and dissolved in 1826.
128. BRIOUDE, diocese of Puy, founded from Saint-Flour, Dec. 21, 1659. Re-established in 1804.
129. THIERS, Auvergne, diocese of Clermont, founded from Montferrand, Feb. 4, 1660. *Suppressed.*
130. Third Convent of PARIS, founded from the second, July 31, 1660. Re-established Oct. 1, 1803. Transferred to Boulogne-sur-Mer Sept. 12, 1841.
131. BOURG-SAINT-ANDÉOL, diocese of Viviers, founded from Toulouse, July 15, 1763. The Superioress and one Sister were from the first Convent of Grenoble. *Suppressed.*
132. MONACO, diocese of Nice, founded from the first Convent of Aix, Nov. 25, 1663. *Suppressed.*
133. NÎMES, Languedoc (Bishopric), founded from Montpellier, July 12, 1664. *Suppressed.*

134. San Remo, diocese of Genoa, founded October 29, 1666. The Superioress and one Sister were from Nice, and two others from the first Convent of Annecy.
135. Brussels, capital of Belgium, diocese of Malines, founded from Mons, Hainault, Feb. 12, 1667. Re-established Nov. 21, 1845.
136. Munich, Bavaria (Bishopric), founded from Vercelli, Sept. 29, 1667, transferred to Indursdorff 1783, and to Dietramszell 1831.
137. Second Convent of Nice, founded from the first, April 5, 1659. *Suppressed.*
138. Modena, Italy (Bishopric), founded from the first Convent of Aix, April 23, 1669.
139. Rome, Italy, founded from Turin, April 9, 1671. Re-established in 1814.
140. Carpentras, Avignon (Bishopric), founded from the first Convent of Annecy, Aug. 21, 1673. *Suppressed.*
141. Cracow, Poland (Archbishopric), founded from Warsaw, Dec. 21, 1681.
142. Strasbourg, Alsace (Bishopric), founded from Besançon, Sept. 8, 1683. *Suppressed.*
143. Saint-Céré, diocese of Cahors, founded Jan. 23, 1684. The Superioress and some Sisters were from Aurillac, the others from Tulle. Re-established July 9, 1807.
144. Naples, Italy (Archbishopric), founded from Rome, July 12, 1691. Two Sisters were from Turin. This community was preserved as an educational establishment, authorized as a convent in 1828, and entirely re-established, April 25, 1829.
145. Amberg, Germany (Bishopric), founded from Munich, May 24, 1692. *Suppressed.*
146. Wilna, Poland (Bishopric), founded from Warsaw, July 22, 1694.
147. San Vito in Frioul, Venetian Territory, founded from the first Convent of Annecy, Sept. 23, 1708.
148. Salo, Italy, diocese of Brescia, founded from Ancona, Dec. 12, 1712.
149. Massa di Valdinievole, diocese of Pescia, founded from Turin, July 10, 1713.
150. Milan, at Saint-Sophia, Italy (Archbishopric), founded from Ancona, July 13, 1713.
151. Vienna, Austria, founded from Brussels, Aug. 3, 1717.
152. Pescia, Tuscany (Bishopric), founded from Massa, Dec. 10, 1720.
153. Squilace, Calabria (Bishopric), founded from Rome, May 31, 1722. *Suppressed.*
154. Lublin, diocese of Cracow, founded from Cracow, June 20, 1723.
155. Darf, in Valcomanique, founded from Salo, 1729. *Suppressed.*
156. Palermo, Sicily (Archbishopric), founded from the first Convent of Annecy, Aug. 5, 1731.

157. Pistoia, Tuscany (Bishopric), founded from Massa, Feb. 28, 1737.
158. Alzano, Venetian Territory, diocese of Bergamo, founded from Ancona, March 25, 1737.
159. San Georges, Neapolitan Territory, diocese of Benevento, founded from Rome, June 13, 1737.
160. Antoura, Mount Libanus (Asia), Jurisdiction of the Maronite Patriarch, founded in 1744.
161. Roveredo, Italy, diocese of Trent, founded from Munich, May 9, 1747. *Suppressed.*
162. First Convent of Madrid, Spain (Archbishopric), founded from the first Convent of Annecy, Feb. 18, 1749.
163. Miazino, Italy, diocese of Novara, founded from Darf, Nov. 19, 1749. *Suppressed.*
164. Sultz-Bach, Bavaria, founded in 1755. *Suppressed.*
165. Genoa (Archbishopric), founded from the Convents of San Rémo and the first of Nice, 1768.
166. Offagna, diocese of Asimo, founded from Pescia, Dec. 7, 1772.
167. Lisbon, Portugal (Archbishopric), founded from the first Convent of Annecy, Jan. 30. 1784.
168. Second Convent of Madrid, founded from the first of that city, 1798.
169. Venice, Lombardy (Archbishopric), founded in 1801. (See Lyons, No. 2.)
170. Westbury, England, founded at Shepton-Mallet in 1803; transferred to Westbury in 1831.
171. Marvéjols, diocese of Mende, founded at Saint-Flour in 1804; transferred to Marvéjols in 1812.
172. Catalayud, Spain (Bishopric), founded Oct. 6, 1806, by some French Sisters, emigrants.
173. Quimper, founded in 1807, dissolved in 1817.
174. Côte-Saint-André, diocese of Grenoble, founded by some senior professed of Saint-Marcellin and a Superioress from Romans, in 1808.
175. Soresina, Italy (Bishopric), founded from Alzano, April 25, 1816.
176. Georgetown, diocese of Baltimore, Md., U. S., founded in 1829, by a Superioress from Fribourg and two Sisters from Mans and Valence. (This Community lived under the Visitation Rule from 1779.)
177. La Charité, diocese of Nevers, founded in 1818 by some senior professed of Moulins and Paray.
178. Mayenne, diocese of Mans, founded from Alençon, Sept. 6, 1818.
179. Brescia (Bishopric), founded from Alzano, Sept. 18, 1818.

180. Como, Lombardy (Bishopric), founded in 1819 by the Sisters of Milan. (This house of Franciscans followed our Rules from the year 1782.)
181. Bologna, States of the Church (Archbishopric), founded from Modena, Oct. 13, 1819.
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183. Gex, diocese of Belley, founded from Bourg, Oct. 13, 1824.
184. Lucca, Tuscany (Bishopric), founded from Pignerol, Dec. 9, 1824.
185. Rheims (Archbishopric), founded Jan. 25, 1826, by Sisters from Paris and Lyons.
186. Orihuela, Spain (Bishopric), founded from the first Convent of Madrid, April 10, 1826.
187. Pisa, Italy (Archbishopric), founded from Pistoia, Dec. 15, 1827.
188. Hamieniec, Podolia, Russia (Bishopric), founded from Wilna, Romanow, in 1824, and transferred to Hamieniec in 1830.
189. Dietramszell, Bavaria, founded in 1831. (See Munich, No. 136.)
190. Gleink, diocese of Lintz, Austria, founded from Vienna, Aug. 21, 1832.
191. Mobile, Alabama, U. S. (Bishopric), founded from Georgetown, Jan. 29, 1833.
192. Kaskaskia, Illinois, U. S., founded from Georgetown in 1833, transferred to St. Louis in 1844, and united to the first Convent of that city in 1846.
193. Voiron, diocese of Grenoble, founded from Côte-Saint-André, June 15, 1834.
194. Zouch-Michael, Mount Libanus, Asia, under the jurisdiction of the Maronite Patriarch, founded from Antoura, July 16, 1836.
195. Baltimore, Maryland, U. S. (Archbishopric), founded from Georgetown, Nov. 13, 1837.
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197. Reggio, Calabria (Archbishopric), founded from Naples, Oct. 15, 1839.
198. Padua, Lombardy (Bishopric), founded from Modena, Oct. 16, 1839.
199. Ornans, diocese of Besançon, founded from Gex, Nov. 8, 1840.
200. Boulogne-sur-Mer, diocese of Arras, founded Sept. 12, 1841. (See Paris, No. 130.)
201. St. Louis, Missouri, U. S. (Bishopric), founded from Kaskaskia, 1844.
202. Frederick, Maryland, U. S., founded from Georgetown, Sept. 11, 1846.

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